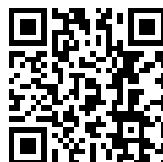

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A TREATISE
ON
Prayer and Meditation,
WITH
REFLECTIONS
ON THE
PRINCIPAL MYSTERIES
OF THE
CATHOLIC FAITH;
TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH
OF
Fray Luis de Granada.

CHESTER :
GRIFFITH, PRINTER, GROSVENOR-STREET.
—
1862.



30.6.77

TO THE
REVEREND FATHER VENANTIUS,
O. S. F. C.,
ONE OF THE CAPUCHIN FATHERS
OF THE
Oratory of St. Francis,
CHESTER;

In aid of the Fund for erecting a New Church in Chester in honour of St. Francis, this translation is dedicated and presented by one of the Congregation, who hopes that criticism will leniently deal with its many faults in consideration of the object for which it is printed, published, and sold.

TO THE PURCHASER.

THE Catholics of Chester are numerous and very poor. The Oratory of St. Francis is a temporary shed at the end of a dark entry in an obscure Row called Watergate Row. It is confined in space, exposed in winter to the inclemency of the weather, and from its frail covering in summer equally incommodious and unhealthy. An admirable Scite has been purchased in Grosvenor Street for the New Church, the erection of which will be commenced as soon as the funds in hand justify the belief that it can be completed. The proceeds from the sale of this work will all be devoted to the building fund.

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A TREATISE ON PRAYER AND MEDITATION,

WITH REFLECTIONS ON THE PRINCIPAL MYSTERIES
OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE FRUITS TO BE GATHERED FROM PRAYER AND
MEDITATION.

1.—As this Book purports to treat on prayer and meditation, it will be well at the beginning, in order to induce persons to devote themselves more cheerfully to these holy exercises, to describe in a few words the fruits to be gathered from them.

2.—It is well known that one of the greatest obstacles that man encounters in the pursuit of eternal happiness is the corrupt inclination of his own heart, and the difficulty and trouble he finds in attempting to work well, otherwise it would be easy to follow the path of virtue and obtain the object for which he was created. Hence the Apostle said, "I delight in the law of God according to the interior man, but I feel another law and inclination in my members, which contradicts the law of my spirit, and which drags me after it captive to the law of sin." This then is the universal root of almost all evil.

3.—To remedy this trouble and difficulty, and to facilitate this business, one of the most profitable means is devotion,

St. Tho.

2. 2. q.

82. art. 1.

because, as St. Thomas says, “Devotion is nothing but a promptitude and readiness to work well, which banishes from our souls all this trouble and difficulty, and makes us ready and eager for all that is good; because it is also a spiritual repast, a refreshing dew of heaven, a breath of the Holy Spirit, and a supernatural act which so regales, strengthens, and transforms the heart of man as to give it much taste and longing for spiritual things, and fresh disgust and horror for sensual things. Each day’s experience shews us this, for the moment a spiritual man emerges from fervent and devout prayer, he renews all his good resolutions, all his fervour and determination to work well, his desire to please and love a Lord so good and sweet as he has thus shewn himself, and to suffer more pains and hardships, yea to shed his blood for him; and then, in fine, is revived and renewed all the verdure of our souls.

4.—And if you ask me how this truly powerful and noble love of devotion is obtained, the same holy doctor has answered, saying, “through meditation and the contemplation of divine things, because from profound meditation and reflection on them proceed that affection and sentiment of the will which we call devotion, and which incites and moves us to everything good.” On this account this holy and religious exercise is so much praised and commended by all the saints, because it is the means to arrive at devotion, which, though itself only one virtue, prepares us for and urges us to the practice of all others, and acts as a general stimulus to them all. To test the truth of this, see how St. Bonaventure boldly proclaims it in these words:—

5.—“If thou desirest to suffer with patience the adversities and miseries of this life, be a man of prayer; if thou desirest to obtain power and strength to overcome the temptations of the enemy, be a man of prayer; if thou desirest to

mortify thy self-will, and all thy affection^s and appetites, be a man of prayer; if thou desirest to know the wiles of Satan and to protect thyself against his deceits, be a man of prayer; if thou desirest to live joyfully and to travel cheerfully along the road of penance and of labour, be a man of prayer; if thou desirest to brush from thy soul the troublesome flies of vain thoughts and cares, be a man of prayer; if thou wouldst nourish it with the fulness of devotion, and have it at all times supplied with abundance of good thoughts and desires, be a man of prayer; if thou wouldst strengthen and confirm thy heart in the way of God, be a man of prayer; finally, if thou wouldst root out of thy soul all vices, and plant virtues in their stead, be a man of prayer; because in that is received the union and grace of the Holy Spirit which teaches all things. And, moreover, wouldst thou mount to the height of contemplation, and enjoy the sweet embraces of the Spouse, exercise thyself in prayer, for this is the way by which the soul ascends to the contemplation and taste of heavenly things. Behold then the strength and potency of prayer; and in proof of it (apart from the testimony of the Holy Scriptures) let this suffice for abundant evidence, that we have heard of and seen, and still see daily, many simple persons who have obtained all the above things, and still greater, by means of the exercise of prayer." Thus far the words of St. Bonaventure. What treasure then so great, what store so rich and so filled with valuables, as this?

6.—Listen also to what is said, bearing upon this point, by another holy religious doctor, when speaking of this virtue. "By prayer," he says, "the soul is cleansed from sin, charity is fed, faith is certified, hope is strengthened, the spirit is filled with joy, the inner man is softened, the heart is stilled, truth is brought to light, temptation is overcome, sorrow is put to flight, the senses are revived, weakened virtue is restored to strength, laziness vanishes, the rust of vice is consumed, bright sparks of the love of

heaven are struck by which the flame of divine love is kindled. To it the gates of heaven are opened, the secrets of heaven disclosed, and the ears of God are ever listening." Let this suffice, for the present, to point out in some manner the fruits of this holy exercise.

CHAPTER II.

ON SIX POINTS BELONGING TO THE EXERCISE OF PRAYER.

1.—The exercise of prayer and meditation may be preceded and followed by several accompaniments which become united to and incorporated with it.

2.—In the first place, before meditation it is necessary to prepare the heart for this holy exercise. This may be likened to tuning an instrument before playing upon it. After this preparation follows the choice of the subject for meditation during the day; one for each day of the week, as we shall explain hereafter. This is certainly essential for beginners until they have learnt how to meditate. Then follows the meditation on the subject read, upon which we must collect our thoughts, ponder and ruminate with all the attention of which we are capable, in order to excite such affections and desires as the soul stands in need of, to rid herself of vice and follow after virtue. A devout thanksgiving for benefits received should succeed the meditation, and then an offering of our whole life, and that of Christ our Saviour, in satisfaction for our sins, and in return for the benefits which we have received. Last comes the petition, properly called the prayer, where we ask for every thing necessary for our own salvation, for our neighbour, and for the whole church.

3.—These six things should accompany prayer, as, besides other advantages, they afford very abundant subjects for reflection; setting before a person various kinds of diet, when, if he cannot partake of one he may taste another, and when also, if he loses the thread of his meditation a fresh one is immediately offered for his contemplation.

4.—I am aware that neither all these points, or this arrangement of them, are at all times necessary ; nevertheless they will serve to assist beginners, supplying a certain order and method by which to regulate themselves at the commencement. And on that account I do not wish anything I have said here to be taken as a perpetual law and general rule, for my aim is not to lay down a law, but only to give a start to the new travellers on this road, on which, after they have entered, care and experience, and more than all the Holy Spirit, will teach them the rest.

§ 1.—*On the preparation for Prayer.*

5.—It will be well now to treat specially on each of the above-mentioned points, and to commence first with the preparation. Being then in your oratory, either kneeling, or standing, or prostrate, or (if you cannot manage it otherwise) seated, having first made the sign of the cross, collect your thoughts, and separate them from all the things of this life ; raise your mind upwards, considering that our Lord beholds you, and shew the same attention and reverence as if he were actually present. Then, with an act of general contrition for all your sins, if it be morning prayer, say the general confession ; and, if night prayer, examine your conscience on every action of the day, on your thoughts, words, deeds, and omissions, and on your forgetfulness of your Saviour. After bewailing the sins of the day, and all those of your past life, and humbling yourself before the divine Majesty, in whose presence you are, you may say with the holy Patriarch :—

6.—“I will speak to my Lord, though I am dust and ashes ;” and, with these words as the ground-work, you can pause a little, reflecting who you are and who God is, in order to humble yourself profoundly before so great a Majesty : for thou art an abyss of infinite sins and miseries, and God is an infinite abyss of riches and greatness. With this reflection bow down in reverence, and humble thyself before so great a Majesty.

7.—In addition to this, beg of God to grant you the *grace* of that attention and devotion, and that interior recollection, accompanied with fear and reverence, which become the presence of his sovereign Majesty ; and that you may so spend the time of prayer as to rise from it with fresh strength and breath for his service, because prayer which produces not this fruit is very imperfect and of little value.

§ 2.—*On the Lesson.*

8.—Having finished the preparation, read the subject for your meditation, not in a hurried cursory manner, but calmly and attentively ; bringing to bear upon it not merely the understanding to comprehend it, but rather the will to enjoy what is understood ; and when any devout passage occurs dwell upon it, the better to feel its force.

9.—And let not the lesson be too long, to afford greater time for the meditation, which is much more profitable, inasmuch as it ruminates upon and penetrates deeper into the subject. But should the heart be so distracted that you cannot begin to pray, read a longer lesson, or unite reading and meditation, reading a sentence and meditating on it, and then another, and so on ; because the understanding, being thus linked to the words of the lesson, has not such room to wander abroad as when free and loose. Still it would be better to struggle to cast off the thoughts, and to persevere and strive, like another Jacob, during the whole night in the labour of prayer, because at last, when the battle is over, the victory is gained, the reward being devotion or some other greater grace, which is never denied to those who fight faithfully.

§ 3.—*On the Meditation.*

10.—After the lesson follows the meditation upon its contents. These are sometimes such as the imagination can figure to itself ; for example, the stages of the life and passion of Christ, the last judgment, hell and paradise ; at other

times they are rather subjects for the understanding more than the imagination, as the consideration of the blessings of God, his goodness and mercy, or some other of his perfections.

11.—The one kind of meditation is called intellectual, the other imaginative, and we are accustomed to avail ourselves of both in these exercises, according to the requirements of the subject. When the meditation is imaginative, everything must be figured to ourselves as it is, or in the way it might happen. We should consider that in the place we then are the whole scene as passing before us, because, with this mode of representing things, our ideas and sense of them become more vivid; but to figure to the imagination events as actually taking place in our own particular room, is apt to weaken and injure the head, and on that account one should not fasten the imagination on things called into existence by his fancy, lest by so doing he weaken the brain.

12.—As the chief subject for meditation is the sacred passion, we may mention that in this mystery we may consider five principal heads or points, which it is well to know; who is he who suffers, what he suffers, for whom he suffers, how he suffers, and why he suffers.

13.—As to the first point, who is he who suffers? I say, the Creator of heaven and earth is he who suffers, the Son of God, infinite in goodness and in wisdom, the most innocent and most holy Son of the Virgin. As to the second point, what he suffers? I say, he suffers the severest torments both of soul and body; because in his soul he suffered incomprehensible anguish, feeling the ingratitude of mankind for this the greatest of all blessings, the sorrows of his most innocent and most holy Mother, and the sins of the world, present, past, and future, on account of which he suffered. So in his body he suffered cold, heat, hunger, weariness, watchings, injuries, and treasons; he was sold by his disciple, he sweated drops of blood, he was spit upon, buffeted, often bound with cords, forsaken, calumniated, falsely accused, scourged,

scoffed at, clothed in the dress of a fool, crowned with thorns, esteemed more worthless than Barrabbas, though innocent he was condemned, he carried his cross on his back, was crucified between two thieves, drank vinegar and gall, and at last suffered an ignominious death on Mount Calvary, on the day of the highest festival.

14.—The third point for consideration is, for whom he suffered? and it appears he suffered for disobedient and ungrateful man, created out of nothing, who of himself can do nothing, knows nothing, and is worth nothing; for a creature of whom he never had, and could have any need; for a creature that had offended him, and would, over and over again, offend and disobey him.

15.—Fourthly we must consider, how he suffered? Here we shall find that such were his patience and meekness that he uttered no complaints against any one; such his humility that he chose the most ignominious death of that time; such his readiness, that he went out to meet his enemies; his charity, that he saluted him who sold him as friend, he healed the ear of one of his captors, he looked with compassion on him who denied him, and he prayed for those who crucified him.

16.—We must consider fifthly, why he suffered? To satisfy divine justice, to appease the wrath of his Father, to fulfil the promises made to the patriarchs and prophets, to save us from hell and enable us to obtain paradise, to shew us by his perfect obedience the road to heaven, to confound the devils who had lost through pride what man gained through humility.

§ 4.—*On the Thanksgiving.*

17.—After the meditation follows the thanksgiving, for which the past meditation should furnish the occasion, rendering thanks to our Saviour for the favours he has conferred on us by it; for example, if the subject of meditation has been the passion, we should give thanks to our Lord for

the many sufferings he endured in our redemption ; if on sin, for waiting so long for our repentance ; if on the miseries of this life, for delivering us from so many ; if on death, for freeing us from its perils and waiting for our conversion ; if on the glories of paradise, for creating us for so great a blessing ; and so of the rest.

18.—To these favours may be added others on which we shall speak hereafter, viz :—our creation, preservation, redemption, vocation, &c. Thus we should thank God for having created us after his own image and likeness ; for giving us a memory to recollect him, an understanding to know him, and a will to love him ; for having given us a guardian angel to protect us from so many troubles and dangers, from so many mortal sins and death itself when we were buried in them, which was no less than delivering us from eternal death ; for having caused us to be born of Christian parents, to be baptized, and so made children of grace, with the promise of his glory and adoption as his sons.

19.—To these favours each one should join such other general and special favours as he is conscious of having received from our Lord ; and for these and for all others, both public and private, give all the thanks in his power, and invite all creatures, both in heaven and on earth, to assist him in this duty, and for this purpose recite the Canticle : *Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino, laudate et superexaltate, &c.*, or the Psalm ; *Benedic anima mea Domino, et omnia quæ intra me sunt nomini sancto ejus, &c.*

§ 5.—On the Offering.

20.—Having given thanks from the bottom of the heart for all these favours, the heart itself naturally bursts forth with that feeling of the prophet David, where he says, “What shall I give to the Lord, for all the favours which he hath done to me.” This desire is in some measure gratified by giving and offering to God all that one has and all that one can.

21.—For this end one should offer himself first to be his slave for ever, resigning himself and placing himself, absolutely, in the hands of God to do with him what he will ; and he should offer also all his words, deeds, thoughts, and labours, all his actions and sufferings, to the glory and honour of His holy name.

22.—Secondly, let him offer to the Father the merits and services of his Son, and all the sufferings he endured from obedience in this world, from the manger to the cross, for they are all our property and the inheritance he bequeathed us in the New Testament, by which he constituted us heirs of this great treasure. And as that is no less mine which is conferred as a free gift, than that which is the captive of my spear, so those merits are no less mine, and the right he gave me, is as much my own, as if I myself had borne the sweat and toil. Therefore is a man entitled to make this second offering no less than the first, reckoning in their order these services and sufferings with all the virtues of his most holy life, of his obedience, patience, humility, charity, and the rest, for this is the richest and most precious offering man can make.

§ 6.—*On the Petition.*

23.—Having made this rich offering we may safely venture to ask for something in return. First then, we may pray with deep feelings of love and zeal, for the honour of our Lord, that all people and nations in the world may know him, and praise and adore him as their only true God and Saviour, crying out from the bottom of our hearts in those words of the Prophet, "May all people acknowledge thee, oh Lord, may all people acknowledge thee."

24.—Let us pray also for the prelates of the church, for the Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, and all other ministers and inferior officers, that God will so correct and enlighten them that they may guide all men to the knowledge of and obedience to their Creator. We should also pray, as recommended

by St. Paul, for Kings and those in power, that through their watchfulness we may lead a quiet and safe life, which is agreeable to God our Saviour, who desires the salvation of all, and that all may arrive at the knowledge of the truth.

25.—Let us also pray for the members of the mystic body; for the just, that the Lord will preserve them; and for sinners, that he will convert them; and for the dead, that he will mercifully deliver them from their great sufferings, and grant them the repose of everlasting life. Let us also pray for all who are sick, in prison, or in captivity, &c., that God, through the merits of his Son, will assist them and deliver them from evil.

26.—And, after having prayed for our neighbours, let us then pray for ourselves, and what to ask for each one's own wants will teach him if he would know himself well. Thus therefore let us, through the merits and sufferings of our Lord, beg pardon and amendment for all our sins; and let us especially pray for grace to overcome all those passions and vices to which we are most prone and tempted, shewing all our wounds to our divine physician, that he may heal and cure them with the ointment of his divine grace.

27.—After this finish with a prayer for the grace of divine love, and dwell upon this, and on it spend a great portion of the time, begging of God this virtue with heartfelt longings and desires, for in this consists our whole welfare.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE SUBJECTS FOR PRAYER AND MEDITATION.

1.—Having seen the abundant fruit to be gathered from prayer and meditation, and the different parts into which they should be divided, let us consider the various subjects proper for meditation.

2.—Here it may be remarked that inasmuch as this holy exercise is ordained to create in our hearts the love and fear of God and obedience to his commandments, that will

be the best subject which most tends to realize those objects. And though it is true that the whole creation and the whole of the Sacred Scriptures tend to this, yet generally speaking, the mysteries of Faith contained in the Creed are the most efficacious and advantageous for this, because in the Creed are set out the bounty of God, the final judgment, the pains of hell, and the glory of heaven, powerful stimulants to move our hearts to the love and fear of God; in it also are mentioned the life and passion of Christ our Saviour, in which all our good is centred. These two subjects are specially mentioned in the Creed, and are those on which we ordinarily meditate. On this account it is very properly said, that the Creed is the most appropriate subject for this holy exercise, although that also may be the best for each one which most excites his heart to the fear and love of God.

3.—Accordingly, for the use of beginners who are new to the business, and before whom should be set food easy of mastication and digestion, I will here set out two kinds of meditation for every day of the week, one for night and one for morning, chiefly selected from the mysteries of our faith, in order as twice a day we take food for the support of the body, we may do the same for that of the soul, the food of which is meditation and the contemplation of divine things. Some of these meditations are on the sacred passion and resurrection, the rest on the mysteries we have mentioned. Those who have not time for retirement twice a day, may at least meditate one week on one set of mysteries, and during the following week on the other set, or may only make use of those on the passion and life of Jesus Christ our Saviour, they being the chief one's, though it is not advisable to omit the others at the beginning of their conversion, as they are most appropriate then, when the fear of God, and sorrow and detestation for sin, are most required.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE SEASONABLENESS AND ADVANTAGE OF THE FIRST SEVEN
MEDITATIONS FOR THE DAYS OF THE WEEK AT NIGHT.

1.—On the first seven following meditations, oh Christian reader, thou canst philosophise and occupy thy thoughts during the days of the week, not because thou mayst not also think on other things, and at all times also upon them when it pleaseth thee, for, as we have said already, every thing which inclines the heart to the love and fear of God, and the observance of his commandments, is fit matter for meditation ; but because these subjects which I have named suggest themselves, first as forming the principal mysteries of our faith, and are those which of themselves most forcibly urge us to what I have mentioned ; and secondly because beginners, who need milk, have here as it were masticated and digested for them the food for their meditation, that they may not walk like strangers in a foreign land, wandering through doubtful places, first taking up one thing, and then another, and next casting them aside, with no stability in anything.

2.—It must also be borne in mind that these meditations for the week are very suitable, as already said, for those who are at the beginning of their conversion ; that is, when a man just commences to turn himself towards God, because then it is well to start with all those things which most move to sorrow and detestation of sin, to the fear of God and contempt for the world, which are the first steps on the road. Those, therefore, who are beginners should persevere for some time in the consideration of these topics, to ground themselves firmly in these virtues and feelings.

CHAPTER V.

ON KNOWING ONE'S-SELF, AND ON THE SINS OF OUR PAST
LIFE.—FOR MONDAY NIGHT.

1.—Having made the sign of the cross, with the preparation mentioned in the second chapter, study to learn in the

knowledge of thyself and the recollection of thy sins, the road to true humility of heart and repentance, which are the two first gates, and also the foundations of a Christian life.

2.—For this purpose thou shouldst first consider the multitude of the sins of thy past life, especially of those committed before thou knewest God; for, if thou examinest well, thou wilt find they have outnumbered the hairs of thy head, and that thou hast lived during all that time the life of a gentile who knows not God. Turn thy eyes for a moment to the ten commandments, and also the seven capital sins, and thou wilt not perchance find one commandment against which thou hast not oftentimes sinned in thought, word, or deed, nor one of the capital sins which thou hast not frequently committed. Our first parent ate of only one forbidden tree when he committed the greatest sin in the world, and thou
Gen. iii. hast set thy hands and eyes upon all innumerable times.

3.—Take a survey also of all the divine favours bestowed on thee during thy past life, and see what use thou hast made of them; for if thou hast to render an account of them all, it were well to take it in hand thyself first, and enter into
Cor. xi. judgment with thyself, that thou mayst not afterwards be judged by God. Then tell me now, in what didst thou waste thy childhood? In what thy boyhood? In what thy youth? Finally, in what all the days of thy past life? How didst thou employ the senses of thy body and the faculties of the soul which God gave thee wherewith to know and serve him? In what didst thou employ thy eyes, but to gaze on vanity? In what thy ears, but to listen to lies? In what thy tongue, except perchance in oaths and murmurs, and all the indecent talk of worldlings? In what thy taste, and smell, and touch, except in dainties and sensual gratifications? What use hast thou made of the sacraments which God instituted for thy cure? How hast thou thanked him for his favours? How hast thou hearkened to his inspirations?

In what hast thou employed thy health and strength, and the bounties of nature, and the so-called goods of fortune, and the means and opportunities which God gave thee to enable thee to lead a good life? What commendable care hast thou shewn for thy neighbour, and what works of mercy on his behalf have distinguished thee? What answer wilt thou make on that day of account when God shall say to thee, "Give me an account of thy stewardship, and of the property I entrusted to thy care, for I wish to employ thee no longer?" oh barren tree, prepared for eternal fire! What answer wilt thou make on that day when an account shall be demanded of all thy life, and of every point and moment of it?

4.—Secondly, reflect on the sins thou hast committed and daily continuest to commit, even since thou hast opened thy eyes to the knowledge of God, and thou wilt find the old Adam still living within thee, with many of his old roots and habits. For this purpose look at the faults and negligences into which every day thou hast fallen, both as regards God, thy neighbour, and thyself, and in all thou wilt find thyself very defective.

5.—Consider also thy negligence in the service of God, thy ingratitude for his favours, thy rebellion against his inspirations, thy slothfulness in his service, which thou hast neglected or not performed with the readiness and diligence which thou oughtest, nor with that purity of intention required of thee, but only out of respect for others or from worldly motives.

6.—Consider further how hard thou art upon thy neighbour, how compassionate to thyself, how fond of thy own will, and of thy flesh, and of thy honour, and of all thy interests. See also how proud thou art, how ambitious, angry, hasty, vainglorious, full of envy and malice, dainty, changeable, inconstant, sensual, devoted to thy pleasures, to idle conversations, laughter, and tittle-tattle. Look also how inconstant thou art in thy good resolutions, how thoughtless

in thy conversations, how improvident in thy actions, and how cowardly and pusillanimous in all serious things.

7.—Thirdly, having considered in this order the multitude of thy sins, reflect upon their heinousness, that thou mayst, in every way, see how thy misery is aggravated. For this purpose, consider three things worthy of notice connected with the sins of thy past life; against whom thou hast sinned, why thou hast sinned, and in what manner thou hast sinned. If thou considerest against whom thou hast sinned, thou wilt find thou hast sinned against God, whose goodness and majesty are infinite, and whose favours and mercies towards man are more numerous than the sands of the sea, in whom alone are centred all excellences, and every claim and obligation which we can owe to creatures, in the highest degree of obligation. But why hast thou sinned? For a point of honour, for an animal pleasure, for a shred of interest and other trifles light as air. Of this he complains bitterly through the Prophet, Ezec. xvi. saying, "They have dishonoured my people for a handful of barley and a morsel of bread." But, in what manner hast thou sinned? With such ease, with such boldness, without remorse, without fear, and at all times with such satisfaction and pleasure as if thou wert sinning against a wooden god, who neither knows nor sees what is passing in the world. Is this then the honour to be paid to such exalted majesty? Is this the thanksgiving for such great favours? Is this the return for that precious blood which was shed upon the cross? For those stripes and buffets which were endured for thee? Oh miserable wretch that thou art, both for what thou hast lost, still more for what thou hast done, and much more if withal thou dost not see thy ruin!

8.—Consider also the fearful horror God has of sin, and the dreadful punishments he inflicts upon it, in order that thou mayst more clearly appreciate the malice contained in it, as before-mentioned.

9.—After the above reflections, think of thyself as meanly as possible. Think that thou art but a reed bent by every wind, without weight or strength, without firmness or stability, and of no worth. Think that thou art a Lazarus four days dead, a body rotten and corrupted, full of worms, so that the passers-by hold their nose, and turn away their eyes to avoid seeing thee. Consider that in this same manner thou art offensive in the sight of God and his angels, and hold thyself unworthy to lift up thy eyes to heaven, for the earth to bear thee, for any creature to serve thee, of the bread which thou eatest, and of the light and air which thou receivest. And if thou art unworthy of all these, see how much more of conversing with God, of the consolations of the Holy Spirit, and of the pleasures and enjoyments of the children of God. Esteem thyself the poorest and most miserable creature in the world, that has made the very worst use of all God's benefits. And think that, if in Tyre and Sidon (that is for other very great sinners) God had wrought what

Matt. xviii.

he has done for thee, they would have already done penance in sack-cloth and ashes. Know that thou art much worse than thou canst imagine, and that however deep thou art sunk in the mire, and if even thou hast fathomed the bottom of it, every day thou wilt find a depth deeper still wherein to wallow. Cry out to God, and say to Him, Oh

Luke iii.

Lord I have nothing, I am worth nothing, I am nothing, and can do nothing without thee. Cast thyself with that public sinner at the feet of thy Saviour, thy face covered with confusion, with such feelings of shame as a wife would shew before a husband against whom she had committed treason; present thyself before that spouse of heaven against whom thou hast committed such numerous shameful acts of adultery, and, with sorrow and heartfelt repentance, beg pardon for thy iniquities, and that in his infinite compassion and mercy he will again receive thee into his dwelling.

10.—At the conclusion of the meditation make an act of thanksgiving, an oblation, and petition, as mentioned in the second chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

ON SIN; BEING A LENGTHENED CONSIDERATION OF THE SUBJECT OF THE LAST MEDITATION.

§ 1.—*On the advantages to be derived from the consideration of our sins, and to what end this consideration should be directed.*

1.—The first plank after shipwreck, says St. Jerome, is penance. 'Tis the first step of the ascent, the foundation stone of the spiritual edifice. To attain this virtue, after divine grace, of which true repentance is the gift, it is profitable to consider the multitude of our sins, both past and present, and their enormity and malice, because from this consideration come compunction and sorrow.

2.—And not only these, but many other exalted virtues spring out of the same consideration. From this, spring the knowledge of ourselves (of which we shall treat in the following meditation), contempt of ourselves, the fear of God, a hatred for sin, and other similar affections of the mind, in which perfection materially consists. To all these objects thou must therefore apply and direct this exercise, that it may be more profitable to thee, striving to extract all those sweet fruits from the bitter root of this consideration. But, as to attain these fruits divine grace is necessary, which is chiefly conceded to the humble and devout, beg now of God this humility and devotion, that retired in the recesses of thy heart, James II. 1. Peter I. 5. thou mayst imitate that holy King who said,

Isaiah xxxviii.

“I will weigh before thee, oh Lord, all the years of my life in the bitterness of my heart.”

§ 2.—*On the multitude of the sins of our past lives.*

3.—Since then thou desirest to know the great number of thy sins committed in days gone by, consider shortly all the

commandments, and the seven deadly sins, and thou wilt assuredly find that there is scarcely one commandment thou hast not broken, nor one mortal sin into which thou hast not fallen.

4.—The first commandment is to honour God, who, according to St. Augustin, is honoured by the three theological virtues—faith, hope, and charity. What sort of faith has he held who has lived a life as dissipated as if he believed all the mysteries and doctrines of faith to be a lie? What hope has he entertained who never thought on a future life, and knew not what it was in his troubles to call on God for his assistance? What charity had he who loved the point of honour, the straw of self-interest, and the mire of pleasure, better than God himself, because for each of these he spurned and offended him? What reverence had he for that sovereign Majesty, who was accustomed to drag through the dirt that most holy name by cursing and swearing at every step and on every idle occasion? How did he keep holy his festivals who only looked forward to those days as opportunities for sinning in swearing and strutting about, and scandalizing innocent women, and indulging in sin, and bad company?

5.—Consider then how harsh and uncourteous thou hast been to thy parents, how disobedient to thy superiors, how careless about those under thy charge as to teaching them what is good and directing them in the ways of God. Then the hatreds, passions, and desires of revenge thou hast harboured, who can number them? And if these cannot be counted, who can count the multitude of lies and all kinds of meanness into which thou hast fallen in thy actions, in thy words, and in thy desires? What has thy heart been better than a sty and a quagmire? What thy mouth but what the
Psalm v. Prophet calls “an open sepulchre,” whence issued the bad odours of thy soul already dead within thee? What thine eyes but the windows of death and perdition? What presented itself before them which thou didst not covet

and long for, forgetting that God was present and that he had placed an interdict on that very tree? To the fornicator,

Eccle. xxiii. • says the wise man, all bread is sweet since his appetite and hunger are so insatiable that he tastes every thing and every where finds flavor, forgetful that there is a God. Again, who can disclose the extent of thy avarice and the thefts of thy desires which, far from being satisfied with what God had given thee, thought the whole world too little to satiate them? And if he who covets his neighbour's goods is a robber in the sight of God, how many times has he deserved the gallows who has in his heart committed so many robberies? Then thy lies, murmurings, and rash judgments, are as numberless as the others, for scarcely hast thou joined in conversations with others but the burthen of thy discourse has been thy neighbour's character, the widow, the maid, the priest, or the lay brother, regardless of every rank and condition.

6.—Thus hast thou observed the divine commandments ; let us see next how thou hast escaped from the deadly sins. The pride of thy heart, what has it been? The desire for honour and praise, to what pitch has it reached? Thy presumption and self-esteem, and thy contempt for others, who can explain them? What shall I say of the vain-glory and levity of thy heart, since a pretty feather, nice fitting hose, and a silk ribbon, have sufficed to lift thee off thy feet with anxiety to be admired by everybody? What step hast thou taken, what act hast thou done, what words hast thou spoken free from vanity and self-love? Thy dress, establishment, retinue, table, bed, the civilities of society, thy every step and action have smacked of pride, and have all walked clad in vanity? Then thy anger like a serpent's, thy gluttony like that of a hungry wolf, thy sloth only to be compared with that of the stolid ass! Thy envy more bitter than the viper's! and to sum up, if thou wilt examine thyself closely, thou wilt find thyself corrupted and lost in everything.

7.—Consider next thy five senses and all the other blessings God has bestowed upon thee, and see in what manner thou hast made use of them, and thou wilt certainly find that all those things, given thee the better to enable thee to serve the giver, have been made use of as arms against him. In offending him thou hast wasted strength, health, property, and life; understanding, memory, and will; sight, tongue, and every other faculty.

8.—These and much worse offences thou wilt have committed in thy past life, therefore with great truth canst thou cry out with that great but repentant sinner, “My sins exceed in number the sands of the sea and have extended on every side; I have done many abominations and multiplied my offences.” With so many reasons then for placing a curb upon thyself, and filling thy soul with the fear of God, viz:—the abundance of his favours and the immensity of his goodness and justice, thou hast neither thanked him for his favours, loved him for his goodness, nor feared him for his justice, but forgetful of all and blind to everything, thou hast rushed into every sort of vice. And had the provocations and incentives to sin been great, there might perhaps be some sort of excuse for thy offences; but what shall I say? That for trifles light as air, for the toys of children, often for nothing, absolutely for no object but through sheer contempt thou hast sinned against thy Maker. Some, when they commit sin, do so with some fear and remorse of conscience, or at least are conscious of guilt after they have incurred it; and thou forsooth wouldst be so blind and so senseless that thou wouldst commit a thousand sins without any sort of fear or remorse of conscience, as if thou didst not believe in a God or believed in one after the manner of those

Psaln xciii. 7. who said, “The Lord will not see what is done here; the God of Jacob will not understand it.” This is one of the greatest evils in the world, because amongst the six things which Solomon states are abhorred of God is, “A

Proverbs vi. 18. swift foot to run after mischief," referring to the ease and activity of the wicked in falling into sin.

§ 3.—*On the sins and faults into which a man may have fallen after he has begun to know God ; containing very profitable instruction for self-knowledge and for advancing on the way to perfection.*

9.—Thou hast certainly fallen into these and many other sins before thou knewest God, but since thou hast arrived at the knowledge of him, if happily thou hast done so, beg of him to open thy eyes a little, and thou wilt still find many remains of the old man, and many Jebusites who will have clung to thee in the land of promise from thou having shewn thyself too compassionate towards them.

10.—Behold then how imperfect thou hast been in every duty, both towards thy God, thy neighbour, and thyself. See how little thou hast advanced in the service of thy Creator during the long time that has elapsed since he called thee, how strong thy passions still are, how little progress thou hast made in virtue, how thou still continuest the same, like an old knotted tree which never thrives. Nay perhaps thou hast absolutely gone back, since in the ways of God not to advance is to recede. At least in fervour and devotion thou wilt like enough find thyself much behind what thou once wast in former times.

11.—See also the little penance thou hast done for thy sins, thy little love and fear and thy slender trust in God. The little love shewn in the little thou workest for him, the little fear in the many sins thou still committest, the slender hope shewn in the time of trouble and in the heavings and pains which thou sufferest under every tribulation, because thy heart does not ride firmly at the anchor of hope.

12.—Furthermore see how faintly thou respondest to the divine inspirations, what a rebel thou art to the light of heaven, how thou fillest with sorrow the Holy Spirit since to spare thy

own will thou thwartest his. He calls thee one way and thou followest another, he desires thee to serve him in one way, thou wilt do so in another. And though the will of God be evident, if thy own incline another way, thou followest thy own instead of his. Should he summon thee to interior devotions thou hastenest to perform external acts, if to prayer thou takest to reading. He desires thee to attend first to thyself, thou neglecting thyself and thy own advancement for the benefit of others so mismanagest matters as to be useless both to thyself and to them. In fine, whenever thy will runs counter to the will of God, thine is victorious, that of God is defeated.

13.—If perchance thou dost any good works, what are thy shortcomings? In prayer, how often art thou distracted, wearied, sleepy, and lazy, without respect for the divine Majesty with which thou art conversing, looking only to the end of thy task in order to attend to some other more agreeable to thy taste? As to other good works, how luke-warmly and how imperfectly are they performed? And if it be true that God regards not so much the performance of a good work as the intention with which it is performed, how many good works hast thou done free from dust and soil, unsullied by vanity and the world? How many hast thou done to satisfy the importunities of others or out of compliment to them? How many for thy own honour or reputation? How many to please man? How many for thy own pleasure and gratification? And how few purely for God, regardless of any respect for the world?

14.—Next turning to thy duty to thy neighbour, thou wilt find thou hast not loved him as God has commanded, nor borne his sufferings as thy own, nor relieved him in his distresses, nay scarcely hast thou shewn him compassion. And perhaps instead of compassionating him, thou hast vented thy indignation and complaints against his doings, however true it may be that real justice shews compassion, and false

justice indignation. At all events, as regards that bond of love for which the Apostle so often prays, commanding us to love one another as members of the same body, since we are

Eph. iv.

all participators of the same spirit, how little hast thou been bound by it? How often hast thou neglected to relieve the poor, to visit the sick, to assist the widow, and to help him who was helpless? To how many hast thou given scandal by thy conversation, thy actions, and thy answers? How often hast thou set thyself above thy equals, contemned thy inferiors, and flattered thy superiors, sinking thyself to the level of the ant before some, but towering like an elephant before others?

15.—But now looking into thyself and placing thy hand upon thy heart, when thou withdrawest it, with what a leprosy is it covered! What deep sores thou hast touched! How vigorous dost thou find the roots of pride and the love of honours, the feeling of vain-glory, hidden hypocrisy, with which to cloak thy faults and to appear to others different from what thou art! How fond thou art of self-interest and of the gratification of the flesh, for which oftentimes under the cover of necessity, thou not only makest provision but even a slave of thyself, thou not only providest sustenance but even dainties! And should thy equal advance a step before thee, how quickly do the roots of envy bud forth! And if one only touches thee on a point of honour, how quickly bursts forth thy wrath!

16.—Furthermore, amongst all these evils who can tell the looseness of thy tongue, thy levity of heart, the obstinacy of thy self-will and thy inconstancy in good resolutions? To how many bad words does thy tongue give utterance, to how many idle ones, to how many against thy neighbour and in praise of thyself? How seldom is thy self-will checked and its prey sacrificed for the love of God or of thy neighbour? Look well into it, and thou wilt find how seldom thou gainest a victory over thyself though it is necessary always to do so to be truly virtuous. What shall I say then as to the incon-

stancy of thy good resolutions but conclude in a few words that no weathercock turns with every wind so easily as thou art shifted by every puff that breathes upon thee? What is thy whole life but child's play, weaving and ravelling, forming a resolution in the morning, tired in the evening if not sooner? Is not this the case of the insane man mentioned in the Gospel whom the Disciples of our Saviour could not cure, because his malady was so strong?

17.—Then the levity of thy heart, its inconstancy, instability, and pusillanimity, are as little capable of explanation. It assumes as many forms and appearances as occasions offer at every hour, without the slightest stability or firmness: how readily is it distracted by every matter of business, how easily turned aside from its object, and what a trifle sufficed to molest, weary, and stifle it?

18.—Finally, having cast up the account and seen how much thou hast and how much is wanting, thou wilt find much reason to fear that all thou hast may be but the appearance and shadow of virtue, false righteousness, (since there is in thee but a slight taste for God, perhaps more akin to the flesh than the spirit.) And with all this thou seemest perhaps to thyself safe, and perhaps thou wilt say with the

Luke xviii.

Pharisee that thou art not as the rest of men, because they feel not what thou feelest; whereas in truth thy soul is full of self-love, self-will, and all the other vices and passions we have just spoken of. Thus all thou hast done is comprised in crying out "Lord, Lord," and omitting to do the will of God; imitating the false justice of the Pharisees, and being the luke-warm person mentioned in the Apocalypse whom God vomits out of his mouth.

19.—On all these points thou shouldst seriously reflect and direct thy attention to grief and sorrow for thy sins, to the knowledge of thy own misery in order on the one hand, to beg pardon of God for thy offences, and on the other, strength and grace never more to offend him.

§ 4.—*On self-accusation, self-hatred, and self-contempt.*

20.—After a man has thus taken into consideration the multitude of his sins, and seen himself so burthened with them on every side, he should humble himself and excite his heart to contrition with all his strength, and desire to be despised by all creatures for having himself despised the Creator of all. For this purpose he may make use of a very devout reflection of St. Bonaventure where, speaking of compunction and self-contempt, he says :—

21.—“Brethren, let us contemplate our great baseness and the enormity of our offences against God, and humble ourselves as much as possible before him. Let us be afraid to lift up our eyes to heaven, but rather strike our breasts like the Publican in the Gospel, that God may take compassion upon us. Let us fortify ourselves and take up arms against our own malice, constitute ourselves our own judges, each one saying within himself ; if for my sins my Lord was so despised and afflicted, how can I cease to lower and depreciate myself, being myself the sinner ? Far be it from me to presume to be aught else than the vilest and most abominable dunghill, the smell of which is even intolerable to myself. I am he who despised God and a second time crucified him. It seems as if the whole world exclaimed against me, saying :—This is the man who offended and despised the Lord of all. This is that perverse and ungrateful man who was more swayed by the deceits of the devil than by the favours of God ; who took more pleasure in following the seductions of the evil one than in the love of his Creator. This man could not be attracted to virtue by divine solicitations nor scared from sin by the fear of divine justice. This is he who to his utmost thwarted and scorned the power, wisdom, and goodness of God. He feared more offending a weak man than the omnipotence of the Almighty. He was more ashamed of committing a base act before the meanest serf, than before the face of God himself. He preferred the embra-

Luke xviii.

ces of a rotten dunghill to those of infinite goodness. This is he who fixed his eyes on the poverty and corruption of the creature and turned his back on the Creator. What shall I say? He abstained from nothing base and abominable in the presence of God, living without restraint and without shame in the presence of so great a Majesty.

22.—Then let all created things, each in its own way, cry out against me and say: This is he who misused us all, since he was ordained to make use of us for the service and glory of our Creator, and he has betrayed us to the service of the enemy turning against the Creator that which was formed for his service. His soul was made beauteous in its likeness to God, he blotting out the divine image, has clothed himself in our image and likeness. He has become more earthly than earth, more slippery than water, more changeable than the wind, more inflamed in his appetites than fire, more hardened than stone, more cruel to himself than a wild-beast, and more venomous than the basilisk against others. Shall I say, he feared not God and made no account of man, and thus scattered his poison on all around him dragging them down with him into the gulph of his iniquities? He was not satisfied to be alone in his offences against God but sought coadjutors and companions in his iniquities. Then, what shall I say of his other sins? Such was his pride that he refused to be subject to God and to bend his neck to the yoke of obedience; preferring to live in antagonism to him and follow his own will in direct opposition to the will of God. If God did not gratify his appetites or visited him with adversity, he was angry with him as with a servant. In all his actions, both good and bad, he looked for praise, as if he were God to whom alone all praise is due, since all His works are good and ordained for a good purpose. What more shall I say? In a certain way

Isaiah xiv. Gen. iii.	he was prouder than Lucifer, more presumptuous than Adam, for they, decked out as they were in splendour and beauty, found some motive
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for presumption, but he a filthy rotten dunghill, what right had he to set any value upon himself in anything?

23.—Let all creatures then justly cry out against me, and say:—Come let us destroy this perpetrator of wrongs against our Creator. The earth exclaims; why do I sustain him? The water cries out; why dont I swallow him down? The air; why do I give him breath? The fire; why dont I consume him? Hell calls out; why do I not drag him down into torments? Alas! Alas! then wretch that I am, what shall I do? Where shall I fly since all nature is in arms against me? Where shall I hide myself? Who will receive me since I have offended all? I have despised God, I have angered his angels, I have dishonoured his saints, I have injured and scandalized man, and I have illused all created things. But why all this long discourse? since in offending the Creator of all things, I by that, offended all created things. I know not then, wretch that I am, where to flee, because I have made all things my enemies, so that when I look around me, there is no one to take my part. Even my own conscience barks at me, and my own bowels accuse and rend me asunder.

24.—Then will I incessantly, like a miserable sinner, weep and pray as long as my dwelling is in this vale of tears, hoping that my most compassionate Saviour will deign to turn his eyes upon me. I will cast myself at his feet in all humility and confusion, crying out; Oh Lord! behold that great enemy of thine, who in thy sight has committed so many abominations. I acknowledge my guilt before thee to be so great, that though I alone should suffer all the pains of hell to which the devils and the wicked are doomed, I could never sufficiently satisfy what my sins deserve. Stretch then, Oh Lord, over this miserable sinner the canopy of thy mercy, thy goodness is greater than my iniquity. The indulgent father rejoiced over the return of the prodigal son, the good shepherd over the sheep that was lost, and the pious woman

over the piece of gold which she found. Oh how happy will that day be when thou wilt throw thy arms around my neck and give me the kiss of peace !

25.—To obtain then this happiness I know what I will do. I will take up arms against myself, and will be the most cruel and severe of all against myself ; I will afflict myself in every way with labours and pains ; I will despise myself as filthy mire ; I will rejoice in affronts and insults from every one ; I will welcome the discovery and exposure of my own confusion ; and as alone I am insufficient to hate and condemn myself as I deserve, I will call on all the world and every created thing to add to my affliction, and to concur in making me more contemptible, because I have brought into contempt the Creator of all things. It shall be to me a coveted treasure to increase my sufferings and contempt of self, and to love from the bottom of my heart all who assist me in that object. The consolations and honours of this life shall henceforth be my torment, and I will esteem them as deceitful and flattering enemies. I firmly believe that if I shall act in this manner, I shall induce all (however insulted by me hitherto) to have compassion upon me, and those who have lifted up their voices against me to pray and supplicate for me. Then let disgraces and stripes shower upon me on all sides, that they may raise me up to my most sweet Lord. Let honours and pleasures pass far away from me and find no resting place in me. Let me seek in all things nothing but the honour of God and my own abasement and confusion."

26.—Thus far the words of St. Bonaventure, powerful helps to him who devoutly considers them for the purpose of engrafting in him these four noble feelings ; sorrow for sin, the fear of God, a holy hatred of self, and a desire to be despised for the sake of God. From the first is born repentance, which washes away past sins ; the second the fear of God prevents future sins ; by the third the hatred of self, self-love is overcome ; and by the fourth, true humility conquers the

love of worldly glory. Whoever seeks to obtain these four virtues must employ his mind in these or similar considerations. But by these means especially is acquired that holy hatred of self, which consists not only in flying from the pleasures of the body and seeking for afflictions, but more in despising all the dignities and honours of the world, and in loving every contempt and disgrace for God's sake : and this affection belongs especially to humility, which is a thorough contempt for self, arising from true knowledge and consciousness of sin. I say this, that the lovers of true humility may know that from the fountain whence they draw water to create self-hatred, they will also obtain a supply to nourish and irrigate the tree of true humility from which all virtues grow.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE CONDITION AND THE MISERIES OF HUMAN LIFE.—
FOR TUESDAY NIGHT.

1.—Having made the sign of the cross, with the preparation mentioned in the second chapter, reflect on the condition and miseries of this life that thou mayst see in them how vain is the glory of the world since it is built on such shallow foundations, and how little man should esteem himself since he is subject to such great miseries.

2.—For this purpose, consider first the vileness of the origin and birth of man, namely :—the substance of which he is formed, the manner of his conception, the sufferings and pains attendant on his birth, and the frailty and miseries of his body as will be hereafter enlarged upon.

3.—Consider secondly the great miseries of the life he leads, and especially the following seven. First consider how short life is, since the longest life is from seventy to eighty years, all beyond, if there be any, being trouble and sorrow : and if from this term be deducted childhood, which is more the life of an animal than a man, and the time spent in sleep, when the senses and the mind are dormant, we shall find it

even shorter than it appears. And further, if we compare it with the eternity of the life to come, it scarce appears a second. Hence thou wilt see how foolish those are, who to enjoy this breath of life on earth, run the risk of losing the repose of that life which is to last for ever.

4.—Consider thirdly the uncertainty of this life, another misery to be added to the foregoing, for it is not enough to find it short, but the little there is of it is not secure but doubtful; for how few reach these seventy or eighty years of which we have spoken? How often is the thread cut at the very beginning of the weaving? How many are cut off in the flower, as it is said, how many in the green wood? “You

Mark xlii.

know not, says our Saviour, when your Lord will come, whether in the morning, whether at mid-day, or in the middle of the night, or at the crowing of the cock;” that is, thou knowest not if he will come in childhood or in boyhood; in the time of youth or of old age. The better to appreciate this, it will be useful to call to mind the deaths of many whom thou hast known in the world, especially of thy friends and acquaintance, and of illustrious and celebrated persons whom death has surprised at different ages, mocking all their plans and expectations. I knew a man who kept a record of all the distinguished persons whom he had known in the world in every state of life and who were then dead, at times he read it over or called it to mind, and in every case he figured shortly to himself the tragedy of each one’s life, the folly and deception of this world and the closing scene of human affairs. By this he understood how truly the

I. Cor. vii.

Apostle said, “That the figure of this world passes by;” by which he would give us to understand the little reality of the things of this life, for he does not call them realities but only figures without substance, merely semblances and hence most deceptive.

5.—Consider fourthly how frail and brittle this same life is, a bowl of glass is not more fragile; a breath, a sunbeam,

a cup of cold water or the vapour rising from a sick man's body can snatch it from us, as appears by the daily examples of many whom any one of the above causes has sufficed to cut off in the flower of their youth.

6.—Consider fifthly how changeable life is, never permanent in the same form. For this purpose look at the changes in our bodies, which never continue long in the same state; and the still greater changes in our minds, which are troubled like the sea, disturbed by the shifting winds and waves of the passions which fret us at every hour; and finally how the whole man is subject to the fluctuations of fortune which, never stable, is always rolling from place to place. But above all consider how incessant the progress of life is, never halting day or night, ever advancing and ever wasting some portion of its substance, and like a garment wearing itself out with constant use and drawing nearer and nearer each hour to death. What then is our life but a candle always burning, and the brighter the flame and the more the light it gives, so much the sooner is it consumed? What is our life but a flower opening in the morning, fading at noon, and withered at night? To this the Prophet compares it in the Psalm, where *Psalm lxxxix.* he says, "In the morning man shall grow up like grass; in the morning he shall flourish and pass away; in the evening he shall fall, grow dry, and wither."

7.—Consider sixthly how deceitful is life, perhaps the worst feature about it, because thus we are misled, that which really is foul appearing beautiful, and that which is short indeed, seeming to each one long, in his own case: what in truth is miserable appearing worthy of all our love, since there is no danger, labour, or loss, man will not undergo to save it, though in so doing, he runs the risk of losing eternal life.

8.—Consider seventhly how in addition to being so short the little there remains of life is subject to such great miseries both of soul and body, that an entire life is but a vale

of tears, and an ocean of infinite sorrows. St. Jerome writes that Xerxes, the powerful monarch who levelled mountains with the plains and made a path-way across the sea, ascended a high hill to take a survey of his army assembled around, and composed of countless nations, that after gazing long upon the sight, he is said to have burst into tears; and being asked why he wept answered, "I weep because a hundred years hence, not one of this vast multitude I now behold, will be alive." On which St. Jerome remarks, "Oh could we ourselves mount some watch-tower so high that from its summit we could take a view of the whole earth beneath our feet! Thence thou wouldst see the troubles and miseries of the whole world, nation destroyed by nation, and kingdom by kingdom. Thou wouldst see how some are tortured, others slain, some swallowed up by the sea, others led into captivity. Here thou wouldst see weddings, there weeping, here some born, there others dying, some abounding in riches, others steeped in beggary. In fine, thou wouldst see not only the army of Xerxes, but all mankind, who to day are, and in a few days hence, will have ceased to be."

9.—Call to mind also all the infirmities and afflictions of the human body, and all the sorrows and cares of the soul; look at the dangers to be encountered in every condition of life, as well as in every age of man, and thou wilt the better see what are the miseries of this life, in order that seeing more clearly how worthless all is that the world has to bestow, thou mayst the more easily despise it.

10.—Last of all these miseries comes death, which for both soul and body, is the consummation of all these terrible things, as the body will in an instant, be despoiled of every thing, and the soul will be consigned to its everlasting dwelling.

11.—At the conclusion of the meditation, make an act of thanksgiving, an offering, and a petition, as mentioned in the second chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE MISERIES OF HUMAN LIFE; BEING A LENGTHENED
CONSIDERATION OF THE SUBJECT OF THE LAST MEDITATION.

§ 1.—*On the greatness of the miseries of human life.*

1.—No tongue can describe the extent of misery to which human nature has been subjected by sin. St. Gregory said well, when he declared that only our first parents, who knew by experience the noble state and condition in which God created man, could properly comprehend the miseries of mankind, because calling to mind the delights of the life they had led, they saw more clearly the miseries of the banishment in which they remained. But the children of these unfortunates never knew what true happiness was, but being cradled in misery knew not its real nature, from never having known happiness. Moreover, many of them are so mad and foolish, that if possible they would remain for ever in this life, and make a home of this land of exile and their dwelling in their prison-house, because they cannot perceive its wretchedness. As those who dwell in foul and offensive localities are not aware or sensible of the nuisances from being habituated to them, so these unfortunates do not feel the miseries of this life, in consequence of their having been nurtured in them.

§ 2.—*On the miseries of this life; and first on the origin and birth of man, and on his subsequent condition during life.*

2.—That thou mayst not then fall into this mistake, and into many others still greater which follow it, it behoves thee to consider attentively the multitude of these miseries, and first man's origin and his birth; afterwards the various conditions of his life.

3.—To begin then at the beginning, consider first of what man's body is formed, as from the quality of the material, whether noble or base, we usually estimate the value of the work. The Holy Scriptures inform us that God made man from the slime of the earth. Of all the elements the

earth is the meanest, and the basest part of it is the slime ; hence it follows that God created man out of the vilest and meanest material in the world. So Kings, and Emperors, and Popes, high and mighty as they are, are but dust. This was well understood by the Egyptians, of whom it is written, that when celebrating every year their birthday they carried in their hands some herbs taken out of a muddy pool as emblems of the affinity man has to straw and slime, the common parent of both. If such then is the substance out of which we are made, why dost thou take pride in thyself, Oh dust and ashes ! Oh straw and slime !

4.—But the mode in which the work is completed and the edifice built out of this material, are not subjects fit to be dilated on or looked at, but past by with averted eyes.

5.—Let us then pass on to the birth. What sight so miserable as that of a woman in labour ? What pains so agonizing, what writhings and dangerous contortions, what groans and pitiful shrieks ! I pass over monstrous and cross-births, or I should never finish the description of them. And after all this agony appears a creature weeping, poor, naked, feeble and miserable, wanting everything, capable of nothing. Other animals are born, shod, and clothed ; some in wool, others in scales, some in feathers, others with hides, others with shells. Even the trees are clad with bark. Man only comes naked into the world with no covering but a filthy wrapping, folded in which he enters life. In this apparel he makes his first appearance ; he, whose pride the whole world cannot contain.

6.—Besides this, other animals at their birth know where to seek for what they are in need of, and are provided with instinct to procure it. Some walk, others swim, others fly, each in fine, knows untaught, where to find what it requires to satisfy its wants. Man alone knows nothing, and can do nothing, without the help of others. How many days does he spend in learning to walk ? and that sooner on four feet than two.

How long is it before he is able to speak? Speak, did I say? He cannot even eat until taught how. Only one thing he knows of himself, how to cry. This is his first act, and the only one learnt without a teacher. And to laugh; that too he learns of himself, but not till forty days after his birth: but he can always cry, to shew that nature is more prone to sorrow than it is to mirth. Oh! the folly of men, says the wise man, who from so mean a beginning think themselves born for pride.

7.—Look next at this body in which men so pride themselves, and see if it is really as beautiful as it seems. Tell me, I pray thee, what is the human body but an unclean vessel, in which everything that is poured ferments and is corrupted? What is it but a dunghill covered with snow, white and fair without, but full of impurities beneath? What midden so filthy? What sewer throws out such filth through all its vents? Trees and flowers, nay some animals give out from themselves agreeable perfumes, but man such filth as to seem nothing better than a fountain of abominations.

8.—It is written of Plotinus, a great philosopher, that he felt himself disgraced by the character and meanness of his body, and listened with disgust to some who spoke to him of his lineage, and would never consent to his likeness being taken; saying, it was enough during his life to drag along so foul an object and so unworthy of his noble soul, without being compelled to leave it a lasting memorial of the honour conferred upon it.

9.—It is written of the Abbot Isidore that, on one occasion whilst at table, he burst into tears, and when asked why he wept, answered, "Because I am ashamed to be eating here the corruptible food of a beast, having been created for the society of angels and to feed with them at a divine banquet."

§ 3.—*On other miseries belonging to life, and first on its shortness.*

10.—Consider next the following great miseries of human life. Its shortness, its uncertainty, its fragility, its inconstancy,

its deceitfulness, and its wretchedness, and afterwards death its closing stage.

11.—And first the shortness of life on which Holy Job reflected, when he cried out, “Short, oh Lord, are the days of
Job xiv. man, and thou knowest the number of the months he has to live.” To what do seventy or eighty years of life amount? They are commonly the period to which man’s life is limited, and during which he may live without being overwhelmed with troubles, as the prophet meant, saying, “The days of man when full, are threescore years and
Psalms lxxviii. ten; and should they reach to fourscore, all beyond, are labour and sorrow.”

12.—And shouldst thou analyze this term minutely, instead of thus assuming it as a given quantity; it seems to me thou oughtest not to reckon as life the time of infancy, much less the time of sleep, because infancy, before the use of reason has made us men, is not the life of a man, but of an animal, like that of the kid rejoicing in its gambols. It should also be noted that during infancy, nothing is either learnt or done worthy of the name of man. Then I scarcely see how time spent in sleep can be called living, as the essence of life is the use of the faculties and of reason, both of which are then suspended and as it were dead.

13.—Hence the saying of a certain philosopher that for half of a man’s life, there was no choice between the happy and the miserable all men being equal in sleep and in death. A king detained a prisoner for a year or two cannot correctly be said to reign, whilst he is neither in the enjoyment of power or government. How then shall man be said to live during the time of sleep, whilst the command and use of reason are suspended, and the use of the senses by which he lives? On this account, a certain poet called sleep a relative of death; and another the brother of death, from their close resemblance to each other. If then so large a portion of life be wasted in sleep, how much is there left to live in? And

if the time usually allotted to sleep be a third of the day or eight hours, though some are not content with that, the result would be that a third of life is slept away and consequently not lived. Thou seest therefore how much of so short a life is daily absorbed by sleep. Having thus summed up this truthful account, tell me, how long a term of real existence remains even for the longest livers?

14.—That philosopher shewed much good sense who on being asked his opinion about human life, answered his questioners by turning a summersault and immediately disappearing from their presence, to signify that life was nothing more. 'Tis no more than a falling star passing in an instant, at once consumed and its trail immediately vanishes from the sight, because in a few days after the close of life the recollection of even the most renowned perishes and his memory is forgotten. In fine, this life appeared so short to many of the sages of old, that one called it a dream, and another dissatisfied with that definition, called it the dream of a shadow, it seeming to him too much to call it the dream of a reality, being but the dream of an illusion.

15.—If then we compare the small residue of this life with the life to come, how much less will it appear? The Eccle. viii. preacher said well, "The days of man at the most are a hundred years." What proportion does all this bear to eternity, a drop of water compared with the ocean? And the reason is plain, for if a star which is larger than the whole earth, when compared with the remainder of the sky appears but a speck, what shall our present short life appear when compared with the life to come which will know no end? And if as astronomers inform us the whole globe compared with the heavens is only a speck, because the incomprehensible magnitude of the heavens causes it to dwindle into insignificance, what will this short breath of life appear compared to eternity which is infinite? Doubtless

nothing ; for if a thousand years before God are as yesterday, what will the hundred years of this life seem but nothing ?

16.—All this is seen clearly by the damned when they contrast the life they spent, with the everlasting torments they endure, as they confess in these words in the Book of Wis-

dom v.

dom : “What hath pride profited us, or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us ? All those things are passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on, and as a ship that passeth through the waves ; whereof when it is gone by, the trace cannot be found, nor the path of its keel in the waters ; or as when an arrow is shot at a mark, the divided air presently cometh together again, so that the passage thereof is not known, so we also being born forthwith ceased to be and have been able to shew no mark of virtue.” See then how short will the whole term of this life then appear to these miserable wretches, since they plainly confess that their life was nothing, as immediately after their birth they ceased to be. If such then be the case, what folly can be greater than for the sake of indulging in a momentary dream of false pleasure to choose to go into everlasting torments ? Also if the span of this life be so short and the life to come so long, is it not madness to provide ourselves with so much for the short life and with so little for the long one ? What folly it would be for a person intending to dwell in England to waste all his substance in purchasing stores and in building a residence in the Indies and providing nothing for himself in the land he purposed to inhabit ? How much greater then is the folly of such as invest all their capital in providing for this life, where they have so short a time to live and doing nothing for that which is to last for ever ? especially when they have through the hands of the poor such facilities for transferring their property, according

Eccle. xi. to that of the wise man, “Cast thy bread upon the running waters ; for after a long time thou shall find it again.”

§ 4.—*On the uncertainty of life.*

17.—But short as the limits of life are, were these limits fixed, and could we calculate for a certainty on a definite term, like King Ezechias to whom God granted fifteen years more of life, our misery would be more endurable. But this is not the case, for short as life is, as we have already stated, what little there is of it instead of being certain is precarious, according to that of the wise man, “Man knoweth not his
Eccle. ix. 12. own end; but as fishes are taken with the hook, and as birds are caught with the snare, so men are taken in the evil time, when it shall suddenly come upon them.” That sentence is full of true wisdom which says, “Nothing is so certain as death, and nothing so uncertain as the hour of it.” On this account a certain philosopher compared the lives of mortals to the bubbles on a sheet of water during rain, some burst at once, some float a few moments and vanish, some last a little longer others less; so that though none last more than a few seconds, even in this short time there is great variety.

18.—If then the end of our life is so doubtful, and the hour for rendering our account so uncertain, how is it that we live on in such neglect and indifference? How is it we are not warned by those words of our Saviour, saying:—“Watch ye
Matth. xxiv. 42. therefore, because you know not what hour your Lord will come?” Oh, that man would learn to weigh the force of this command! “For ye know not, says he, the hour; watch ye therefore and be always ready.” As if he would more emphatically say, because ye know not the hour watch during every hour; and because ye know not the month watch during every month; and because ye know not the year be ready in every year, because ye know not for certain during which year ye will be called for, ye know full well during some one ye will be summoned.

19.—The better to shew the force of this argument, I will give an illustration. Suppose set before thee at table

thirty or forty dishes, and thou art warned for a certainty that one of them is poisoned, wouldst thou run the risk of tasting one of them however keen thy hunger? Clearly not; for the dread of tasting that one only would make thee abstain from all. Let us see then how many years of life can at the most remain in store for thee. Perhaps thou wilt calculate on thirty or forty. Since then it is certain that during one of these years thou must die, and thou knowest not in which, why dost not thou fear during each of them, for during one thou wilt undoubtedly be cut off? Thou hast not courage to touch one of the forty dishes though dying of hunger, because thou knowest there is death in one of them; and shalt thou not fear during each of these forty years, since it is quite as certain that during one of them thou must die? Is there any answer to this?

20.—Listen further to another illustration not less striking. Why are the sentinels always on the watch-tower in the presence of the enemy? Because the hour of the assault is uncertain. Ignorance of that hour obliges them to be always on the look out; for if they knew for certain the hour of the assault, they might remain careless at other times and in readiness only at the time of need. For the love of God I beg of thee then to give ear to my words. If thou keepest watch on thy tower every night, because it is uncertain whether the enemy will approach to-day or to-morrow, this year or next, why dost not thou keep guard upon thy soul since thou knowest not when her hour will come? There is as much and more uncertainty about the latter as the former, and the importance is greater beyond all comparison. Where then is the meaning of being always on guard in the one instance and always asleep in the other? What can be more absurd? Thy soul is worth more than all the castles and kingdoms of the world; and looking at the price at which it was purchased, more than the whole choir of angels. She too has more powerful enemies who day and night are seeking to prey upon her.

Look at this also, thou canst not tell whether the assault will be made by day or by night, that all depends upon thy being found ready or taken unawares at that moment, since according to the parable in the Gospel, the virgins who were prepared entered with the bridegroom into the marriage chamber, but those who were unprepared remained without. What reason then is there for not being always on the watch, since the uncertainty is greater, the danger greater, and the object beyond all comparison greater?

§ 5.—*On the fragility of life.*

21.—Not only is the term of life uncertain, but it is also frail and brittle. What glass so delicate and liable to break as the life of man? A breath of air, the evening damp, a sun stroke will each suffice to deprive us of it. Why mention the sun? Has not a piercing glance of the eye been known to kill? A stroke of the sword is not necessary nor an assault of arms, a look only may slay. See well to the safety of the fortress in which the treasure of life is kept, as a glance from a distance may crumble it to the ground.

22.—But this is not so much to be wondered at in infancy when the structure is new and slight. The wonder is that after it is settled and knit together for years that causes no less trivial suffice to destroy it. Ask of what such a man or woman died, and they will tell thee one died from drinking a cup of cold water, one from eating a heavy supper or from sudden joy or grief; sometimes no cause can be assigned, but going to bed in good health he was found in the morning a corpse by the side of his wife. Is there a goblet of glass or a vessel of clay more brittle than this? But why wonder at its being so brittle since it also is made of clay? Is it not more wonderful frail as are the materials and the workmanship how it lasts so long? How happens it that a clock is so frequently out of order? Because it has so many wheels and works and such artificial machinery that though constructed

of metal the least thing suffices to derange it. How delicate then is the structure of our bodies and how much more frail their substance of flesh? If then the construction is more delicate and the material more frail, why should we be surprised if some cog of a wheel be thrown out of gear and thus the motion of life arrested? 'Tis rather more surprising that man lasts so long than that he dies so soon, when we look at the delicacy of the workmanship and the flimsy substance of which it is composed.

23.—This is that miserable frailty which the prophet pointed out in the following words: "God said to the prophet, Cry,"
Isaiah xl. and the prophet answers, "What shall I cry? All flesh is grass and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field, the grass is withered and the flower is fallen, but the Word of God endureth for ever." Upon which words St. Ambrose remarks, "Truly it is so, thus flourishes the glory of man; though he appear great he is as the small passing flower of the field perishable as grass: thus he is only outward shew without strength or substance at the core." For what durability can there be in a body of flesh? What lasting good in so weak a subject? To-day thou shalt see a young man in the flower of his age, all strength and grace, but if sickness attack him at night, thou shalt see him in the morning so changed that the man of yesterday so lovely and beautiful shall appear wretched and unsightly. What shall I say of the other misfortunes and changes that await our bodies? Some are broken down by toil, others enfeebled by poverty, others tormented by indigestion, others corrupted by wine, others weakened by old age, others debilitated by dainty living and enervated by luxury. According to this then is it not true that the grass withers and the flower thereof droops? Ye shall see descendants from noble sires and grandsires of the purest blood and of ancient lineage, with countless friends and surrounded by menials and followed by legions of relatives; but should the wind of fortune veer the least, in an

instant, away fly friends, equals insult them and they are forsaken by all. Ye shall see another laden with riches with the fame of his liberality and generosity trumpeted by every mouth, decked with honours, exalted with power, mounted on the judgment seat and esteemed by all the great favorite of fortune; and it shall come to pass that borne through the city to-day with acclamations and proclamations the time shall come when he shall find his dwelling-place in the same prison to which he was wont to consign others. To how many does it occur to go home surrounded with worldly pomp and in one single night all their splendour is obscured, a simple attack of pleurisy having sufficed to draw the curtain and close the scene. Oh, says Cicero, how deceptive are man's hopes! how inconstant is fortune, and how vain are our contentions and strifes which often break down midway and founder on their voyage before arriving within sight of port! How great then is the madness of the children of Adam who build such lofty towers on such shallow foundations and see not that they are building on sand and that the first blast of wind will sweep away the whole foundation. Oh, into what mistakes do men fall from not looking into their own interiors and first taking an account with their own selves!

24.—And if what we have been discussing be great blindness, how much greater is that of those unfortunate creatures who have lived so many years in sin knowing that between them and hell there lay nothing but this precarious life? Imagine a man suspended by a slender thread over an unfathomable gulph so situate that were the cord to snap he could not escape falling in; tell me, how would he feel who saw himself in this predicament? How timid, how troubled, how ready to give his all to be rescued from such peril? How then, wretched sinner, thou that darest in defiance of the laws of God to continue for so many days and years in a state of sin, how dost thou not see this peril is thy own? If this weak thread of life should break the bottomless abyss of hell will

be thy lot. How canst thou sleep, how is it thou canst play, how laugh, how avoid having ever before thy eyes this dreadful danger ?

§ 6.—*On the fluctuations of life.*

25.—There is another defect in life, its liability to changes and want of stability in itself referred to by Holy Job in the gloomy pictures he has drawn of the miseries of human life in the following passage. “Man born of a woman, liveth for

Job xiv. 1.

a short time, is filled with many miseries, who cometh forth like a flower and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow, and never continueth in the same state.” Passing for a moment these miseries, what is there on earth more changeable? ’Tis said that the camelion changes its colour frequently during the hour, the sea in the straits is notorious for its vicissitudes, and the moon daily changes her form, but what are all these compared to the changes in man? What Proteus ever assumed so many shapes as man does every hour? Now sick, now well, now content, now dissatisfied, now sorrowful, now joyful, at one moment filled with fear, at the next with confidence, now suspicious, now secure, now quiet, now angry, now filled with love and now with hate and oftentimes incomprehensible even to himself. His changes are as quick as the events of every hour as each one fashions him according to itself. The past pains, the present troubles, and the future frets him. If he has no estate he lives by toil, if he possesses one he feeds on pride, and should he lose it he pines in sorrow. Is moon or sea subject to such alterations and changes? The sea only changes when agitated by the winds, but in man both change and sufferings are ever found both in storm and calm.

26.—Then what shall I say of the continued forward movement of our life? What moment is there when we are not advancing towards death? What is the movement of the heavenly bodies but a kind of reel round which life is always winding? Observe how a skein of wool winds itself upon the

reel, at each turn a little is gathered and so on till the whole is finished; in the same way does our life ever coil itself round the revolving reel of time and with every revolution a portion is wound away. Therefore, said Holy Job, that his days were swifter than the courier carrying the post, because the courier however swift and pressing onward is compelled occasionally to rest, but life never pauses in its course, never grants the respite of an hour. "What I am [now writing, says St. Jerome, and what I am reading over and correcting is absorbing a portion of my life; and every stop pointed by the notary marks the loss and diminution of my term of life." As passengers on board ship though seated or lying at their ease are always advancing towards their port of destination, so in life we are all always advancing and gradually approaching to death the common port of universal destination.

27.—If then our life be but a journey to death, and if the hour of death be also the hour of judgment, what is life but a journey to the tribunal of God and an advance to judgment? What folly then can be greater than whilst actually on the very road to judgment, persevering in the commission of offences against the judge and challenging his wrath against us? Open thy eyes miserable sinner, see thy way and where thou art going, and blush or at least take compassion on thyself and reflect how badly thy conduct corresponds with what thou art about to enter upon.

§ 7.—*On the treacherous character of life.*

28.—Yet could I pardon this life of ours all its faults were it not for another, still more heinous, viz:—its deceitfulness, that assumption of being what it is not. For as it is said, pretended godliness is a cloak for twofold wickedness, so it is certain that a treacherous happiness conceals twofold misery. Because if life appeared what it really is and did not give us the lie, we should most certainly not throw ourselves away for it, we should not trust in it, but should always live as warned

against it: but it is full of hypocrisy and deceit, so that being foul it parades itself as beautiful, being short it appears long, being subject to change at every hour it represents itself as ever the same. "Canst thou feel, says St. Jerome, when thou wast a child, and when a youth, and when a man, and when thou wast changed into an old man? Every day we die, every day we change, nevertheless we believe ourselves eternal."

29.—Hence originated those sumptuous edifices of the inhabitants of Megara of whom a certain philosopher observed, that they built as though they had to live for ever and lived as though they were to die next day. Whence arises such forgetfulness of God, so much avarice, so much vanity, so much solicitude to amass riches and so much heedlessness about preparing for death but from the belief that our life will have a long time to run? This false notion causes us to believe that we shall have time for everything, for the world, for vanity, for vice and every vain and idle pastime, and after all some to spare for God. As if we were measuring a piece of cloth upon a table dividing and setting aside this portion for one purpose and that for another, so do we reckon upon life as if we held power and authority over it and time.

30.—This deception springs from a tacit persuasion and belief which every one entertains in his own breast, grounded on no reason nor true foundation, but solely generated by self-love, which though it shudders at death, dreads to be reminded of it or to believe that it is on his threshold, from the anguish that such a belief would occasion. Thus it happens that we can easily believe in the possibility of the early approach of death to others, because as we do not feel so strong an affection for them, it is not so bitter to put faith in this truth; but it is quite another thing as respects ourselves, because as each one dearly loves himself he cannot avoid being pained at being obliged to give credence to so dismal an idea. But such persons frequently find themselves deceived and their dream turns out the reverse of what they fancied, and those whose lives

they estimated as short remain here after they themselves have past away. Like those who for the first time embark aboard ship, fancy on leaving port that the land and buildings are moving away from them, whereas it is they who are moving but the land remains where it was.

§ 8.—*On the sorrows of life.*

31.—But though life is subject to all the miseries of which we have spoken, if what remained of it were truly life, there would still be something, but the worst of all is, that every moment of life such as it is, is liable to such miseries and troubles both of soul and body that it is more worthy of the name of death than life. Then, as a certain poet says, "It is not living but getting well through existence." For circumscribed and short though life be in every other respect, in misery and trouble it is rich and long. Doubtless it is short as a life of joy and short is the time for acquiring knowledge, but though short for the enjoyment of good things, for one thing only, suffering, I find it long enough. Oh dangerous straits, the narrower and more contracted ye are, so much the more perilous is your navigation! Truly had we eyes to look into ourselves we should ever bewail our condition as that of men condemned by the just judgment of God to suffer such dreadful penalties. But to fill to the brim our cup of wretchedness, this misfortune must be added to the rest, that like insane people as we really are, we should be unable to appreciate our misfortunes. The two philosophers Heraclitus and Democritus, though Pagans, understood better than this, of one it is said he was always weeping, of the other that he was always laughing, for they both plainly saw that life was nothing but vanity and misery.

32.—But tell me whence arise the anxieties in which men pass their lives, the sorrows, fears, tears, passions and suspicions, the malice and all the other tribulations and afflictions of the soul, to which man is so subject, that frequently his

passions are roused without cause, he is filled with fear when there is nothing to terrify, and when there is nothing to torment from without he finds something to torture himself from within, according to that of Holy Job, "Why hast thou set

Job xiv.

me against thee oh Lord, and I am become a weight upon myself."

33.—As to the sufferings of the body, who can count them? What toil is necessary to gain the bit of bread with which to support it? The birds of the air and the beasts of the field without labour or trade maintain themselves, but man must sweat night and day and traverse sea and land to obtain the same. This is that misery over which the prophet mourned when he said; "The days of our life we spend like the spider, which toils day and night making its web out of its own entrails, and all this long and costly labour is but to weave the finest net to trap a fly, so miserable man does nothing but toil with soul and body both day and night and all for no use beyond catching flies, that is to say, empty bubbles and worthless trifles. And it sometimes happens, that after much toil and trouble, when the web is finished a gust of wind sweeps away the web and its master with it, and thus perish together in an instant the workman and his work,"

34.—Still if midst all these troubles life itself were safe, our misery would not be so great, yet though it may be secure from hunger 'tis not so from pestilence, and an infinite number of other dangers and infirmities that beset it on every side. Who can reckon the thousands of diseases that nature has in store for man? Books on medicine are filled with diseases and their remedies, and each day's experience adds to the list, and numbers of the ailments of the present day were quite unknown to the learned of the times gone by, and amongst all the remedies you will scarcely find one that is palatable, but on the contrary many worse than the disease itself, so that one pain is alleviated by the introduction of another still more excruciating.

35.—And should some constitutions be fortunate enough not to succumb to these sufferings, they are not on that account proof against other mishaps which daily imperil those whom sickness has spared. What thousands are every day swallowed up by the sea? What multitudes by war? How many have been destroyed by earthquakes, by inundations, by the fall of buildings, by the stings and bites of poisonous reptiles? How many women in child-birth have purchased the lives of their offspring by the sacrifice of their own?

36.—As the beasts of the forest attack us and all things created for our use do us as much injury as service, for it seems as if they had all conspired against us, it would be some relief to find men united amongst themselves and as devoted to peace as they ought naturally to be. But it is not so, for on the contrary man has turned his arms against himself; and amongst all created things none can be found against which man has shewn more cruelty than against his fellow-man. How many machines and implements of war, how many kinds of weapon has man invented as well for the destruction of others as for his own protection against them? How many lives are daily sacrificed by the ruthless sword of the enemy? How many threats and robberies, how many injuries and wounds, how many deaths, dishonours and imprisonments do men daily suffer from their fellow-men? Neither land nor sea, nor the highways nor public squares are safe from thieves, robbers, pirates, and enemies. On every side does cruel rage find weapons ready to avenge itself on an enemy. What mean all these swords, all this artillery, ammunition, and powder, so many masters and inventors of new materials and implements of war, but to multiply on all sides the calamities of the human race? So that though heaven above should proclaim forgiveness, we cannot escape the persecution of our fellow-creatures. 'Tis written of one man Julius Cæsar, who was renowned amongst all the Emperors for his clemency, that he

and his soldiers in different battles slaughtered one million one hundred thousand men. What would he have done had he been cruel? Behold the result of his clemency!

37.—Tully mentions a celebrated philosopher who wrote a treatise on the causes of death amongst mankind, in which are enumerated various kinds of destruction which have desolated the world, such as deluges, plagues, devastations, incursions of wild beasts which rushing suddenly upon whole tribes have entirely swept away and devoured them. But he arrives at the conclusion that a much greater number of the human race has been destroyed by their fellow-men than by all other kinds of calamity put together. What then can be a subject for greater sorrow and wonder? This is that civilized social animal, born without claws and weapons of destruction, without a poisonous sting, to live among the rest in peace and concord.

38.—But what shall we find further if we examine the special miseries of each division and condition of life? How ignorant is childhood, how empty boyhood, how ungovernable youth, and how helpless old age? What is a child but a mere animal in human form? A youth but a hard-mouthed horse without a bridle? What an old man but a sack of infirmities and aches? Man's great solicitude is to attain old age, the most necessitous and helpless portion of existence. The world forsakes the old, kinsmen abandon him, his limbs and senses fail him, yea he is found wanting to himself, since reason flies and sickness only cleaves to him. Nevertheless old age is the target on which human happiness and life's ambition fix their gaze.

39.—With regard to the various conditions of life, it would be an endless task to describe the universal discontent, and the general anxiety which prevails to substitute each one's particular lot for that of another under the impression that it must be better. Thus do men live like the sick man who is always tossing in his bed from side to side in the hopes to find

a more comfortable position, but always in vain as the disease, the root of all his discomfort, lies within.

40.—Finally such is life, that with great reason the wise man said :—"Great and heavy is the yoke which the sons of Adam bear on their shoulders from the day they come out of their mother's womb to the day they descend into the grave, the common mother of all." And St. Bernard ventured to say, "That this life appeared to him little better than that of hell, were it not for the hope we here have of obtaining heaven."

41.—And though all this was the chastisement of sin, nevertheless it was a merciful and remedial punishment intended by an all-seeing Providence to sever our hearts from an inordinate love of this life. Therefore has God filled it with so much bitterness, the better to wean us from it, therefore has he made it so deformed, to prevent us setting our hearts upon it, therefore has he wished we should suffer so much ill-treatment, that we might the more cheerfully quit it and ever long for the true life to come. Because if we leave it, such as it is, with so much reluctance, and are always longing for the fruits and flesh-pots of Egypt, what would our conduct be were life nothing but pleasure and all according to our liking? Who would despise it for the love of God? Who would exchange it for heaven? Who would say with St. Paul; "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ?"

§ 9.—*On death, the last human misery.*

42.—After all these miseries comes death, the last and most terrible of all. This is that misery wept over by the poet. "The best day for man is that which he shuns above all, and then infirmity weighs him down and the sorrows and troubles of old age and beyond everything else the bitterness of relentless death." This is the end of human life of which

Job xxx.

Holy Job says, "I know that thou wilt deliver me to death, where a house is appointed for every one that liveth."

43.—How many miseries are involved in this one alone, I will not now attempt to reckon, but content myself with quoting the words of a certain preacher when inveighing against death, “Oh death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee, how swift is thy step, how stealthy thy approach, how uncertain thy hour, how universal thy supremacy! The mighty cannot escape thee, the wise avoid thee and the strong are powerless against thee. With thee no one is rich, since no one can purchase his life with money. Thou stalkest everywhere, thou searchest every place and thou art met with everywhere. Thou browsest the fields, thou inhaled the winds, thou pollutest the air, thou changest the revolutions of ages, alterest the courses of the world, and dost not forget to suck the waters of the ocean. All other things have their rise and their fall, but thou art always the self-same. Thou art a hammer always striking, a sword never sheathed, a snare into which all fall, a prison into which all enter, a sea where
Job xlii. all are wrecked, a penalty which all undergo, and a tribute which all pay.”

44.—Oh cruel death! How is it thou shewest no compassion by coming at a more seasonable time than thus to put a stop to what is going on so well. In an hour thou stealest the labours of many years, thou cuttest off families, thou leavest kingdoms without a heir, thou fillest the world with orphans, thou severest the course of studies, thou spoilest the finest intellects, thou joinest the end to the beginning and dost nothing by halves. Finally thou art such, that God washes his hands of thee, and justifies himself saying, “That
Book of Wisdom,
1 & 2. he created thee not, but through envy and the deceit of the devil thou didst find thy way into the world.”

§ 10.—*On the fruit to be gathered from meditating
on the miseries of human life.*

45.—These and an infinitude of others are the miseries of our life in meditating upon which our attention should be

directed to two principal objects. The knowledge and contempt of the pride of the world, and the knowledge and contempt of ourselves, for they will be found very serviceable in both cases. Dost thou wish to know in one word what kind of thing the glory of the world is, study attentively the states and conditions of human life and thou wilt see the nature of it. Tell me then can the glory of man be more lasting and more stable than his life? Clearly not, for this glory is an accident based upon life, and failing the foundation, the accidents of necessity also fail: therefore neither riches nor pleasures can last beyond the grave, for there the foundation on which they were based, viz: life itself fails. If then life be as thou hast just heard it described, short, uncertain, frail, inconstant, deceitful and miserable, how can the building last erected on such a foundation with all the accidents attached to such a flimsy substance? By good fortune they may last as long as life, but fortune is often apt to shift before the close of life.

46.—If there be any truth in the saying of a certain Pindar. poet, that this life was but the dream of a shadow, what dost thou think of worldly glory, since it is of shorter duration than life? At what wouldst thou estimate a handsome building erected on a worthless foundation? What value wouldst thou put on an image of wax however exquisitely fashioned which if set in the sunshine would melt into deformity? Why do we prize so lightly the beauty of a flower but because the fabric being so delicate, it fades away when plucked from the stem? True beauty is not found in frail and perishable materials. Then the glory of man will be as the life of man, because though glory should survive him, what can it profit him who is not conscious of it? What does thy praise of the Iliad to-day profit Homer? Nothing more than St. Jerome says when speaking of Aristotle. "Woe to thee, Aristotle, for thou art glorified where thou art not, that is in this world, and tormented where thou art, that is in hell."

47.—Other inestimable advantages may be reaped from the same consideration, for if thou weighest well all these miseries thy eyes will be opened to the blindness of mankind, and thou wilt begin to exclaim ; why do the unfortunate children of Adam take pride in themselves ? Whence all this puffing up of the mind, this pride of heart, this contempt for others, this self-conceit and forgetfulness of God ? Why dost thou swell with pride, oh dust and ashes ? Why dost thou magnify and glorify thyself, oh worm of the earth ? Why not arrest this whirl of vanity with eyes abashed at thy own vileness ? Why must thou hunt so anxiously after the glory of the world stained as it is with so much wretchedness ? What so sweet as not to taste bitter when polluted with so much bitterness ?

48.—Further, if this life be a vale of tears, a prison for criminals and a place of exile for condemned sinners, what means such vanity in such a place of sorrows, what such worldly pomp, such solicitude for house and family, such laughter and rejoicings, such revels and follies, such heaping up riches here below, such forgetfulness to lay up stores above, as if thou wert destined for nothing higher than to consort with beasts and hadst to expect no portion in heaven with the angels ? It is a fearful attribute of thy misery, that so many causes for wretchedness should not be enough to open thy eyes and cure thee of thy blindness.

CHAPTER IX.

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY NIGHT, ON DEATH.

1.—Having made the sign of the cross with the preparation mentioned in the second chapter, let the subject of thy meditation be death. This is one of the most profitable subjects for a christian to meditate on, both for obtaining the true knowledge of the way to avoid sin, as for a timely commencement of his preparation for the hour of death.

2.—In order to render these reflections useful, thou shouldst beg of God to let thee feel by anticipation the sensations of that last struggle, that thou mayst so arrange thy affairs and order thy life now as thou wouldst then wish to have done. For that purpose thou shouldst not look on death as a strange and distant thing but as thy own case, beholding thyself as stretched on thy bed, given up by thy physicians and about to die.

3.—Consider then first the uncertainty of the hour of death; because thou knowest not the day nor the place nor the manner in which it will overtake thee. All thou knowest is, that die thou must, the rest is all uncertainty; but it ordinarily happens that death overtakes a man when least prepared and it is least expected.

4.—Consider secondly the separation that will then take place not only from all things we have loved in this world, but between a man's soul and his body its old and long cherished companion. If exile from country and the home of our childhood be deemed a sad calamity even though allowed to take with us all that we love; how much more terrible must that absolute banishment be from home estate and friends, from father mother and children, from the light of day and the breath of heaven, in a word, from everything. If the ox low when separated from its fellow under the yoke, how much more will thy heart complain when thou art separated from all in whose companionship thou hast borne the yoke of the burthens of this life?

5.—Consider also what will then be the anguish of a man when he reflects on the destiny of his body and of his soul after death; as to the body we know, honoured as it may have been during life, one lot only is open to it, six feet of earth alongside its fellow dead; but as to the soul and what her lot will be, we know nothing; for though hope in God's mercy may strengthen her, the contemplation of her sins must fill her with dismay. Add to this the rigour of divine justice and the depth of the

judgments of God which differ from and clash with the opinions of man. The thief ascended from the cross to paradise,

Luke xxiii.
Mat. xxvii. II Par.
xxiii. & xxxvi.
III Kings xi.

Judas fell into hell from the height of the Apostolate; Manasses found time for repentance after all his abominations; and as for Solomon, though gifted with so many virtues, we are left in the dark as to whether he did or not. One of the greatest anxieties felt at that hour will be, the knowledge that the glory and the pain are eternal, and that both the one and the other are so near, and the ignorance as to which of these opposite destinies the soul is about to pass.

6.—To this anxiety succeeds another equally great; the account then and there to be rendered, and such an account as to make the strongest tremble. It is written of the Abbot Arsenius, that when on the point of death he began to tremble, and that one of his disciples said to him, "Father, and do you now tremble?" To which he answered, "My children this fear is not new to me, for I have always lived in it." There, then will rise up before a man all the sins of his past life, like a band of enemies advancing upon him, and the greatest sins in which he took the greatest pleasure, will be the most pressing and cause him the greatest horror. Then will his memory drag before him the virgin whom he has dishonoured, the married woman whom he has solicited, the poor whom he has despised and ill-treated, the neighbour whom he has scandalized. There, will cry out against me, not the blood of Abel, but the blood of Christ which I shed and wasted when I scandalized my neighbour. And if this sin be judged according to the law which says, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth and a blow for a blow," what hope for a soul to be saved from damnation if judged by that law? Oh, how bitter at that moment is the recollection of past pleasures which once appeared so sweet! Truly did the wise man say,

Proverbs xxiii. "Look not thou on the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, because though at the

time of drinking it appears sweet, afterwards it bites like the snake and spreads its poison like the basilisk." Oh that men would know the great truth here spoken to us. What sting has the snake to wound compared with that with which the memory will be wounded by the recollection of past pleasures!

Apoc. xvii. Jerem. li. These are the dregs of the poisoned drink of the enemy, these are the lees of the outward gilded chalice of Babylon.

7.—Then follow the sacraments of confession and communion and afterwards of extreme unction, the last help of the church in this struggle; and here as before thou must dwell on the anxieties and troubles man must bear for having lived a wicked life, and on how he would then wish to have travelled along another road, and what a different life he would live in future, were but time allowed him for it, and how he will then strive to call upon God, but the pains and agony of his illness will scarcely allow him.

8.—Consider also all those other incidents to illness which are the forerunners of death, how dreadful they are and calculated to fill us with fear. The breast heaves, the voice grows husky, the feet chill, the cheeks freeze, the nose sharpens, the eyes sink and the face becomes livid, the tongue ceases to perform its duties, and lastly, with the flight of the soul the paralyzed senses lose their strength and action. But beyond all, it is the soul that there suffers the greatest pains, she is then struggling and agonized both at parting from the body and from dread of the account she has to render; she naturally refuses to fly because she loves her dwelling and shudders at the reckoning.

9.—Now that the spirit has left the flesh, two ways lie before thee. The one with the body leads to the place of sepulture, the other with the soul to the place of her trial. Let us consider the lot of each. Behold then the body after the soul has taken her leave, look at the garments in which it is arrayed for its obsequies and see how soon it is turned out of its

house. Look at the funeral with all its pageantry, the tolling of the bells, the prayers for the dead, the last offices and doleful dirges of the church, the concourse of weeping friends and lastly all the customary rites until the corpse is laid in the grave to remain buried in the land of eternal oblivion; and as we see how changeable is the course of human affairs, perhaps the time will come when some building will be erected close to thy tomb, however grand that may be, and that they will throw out the earth to build a wall, and thy poor body will be used as earth to form a mud embankment, though to-day it be the noblest and daintiest in the world. But tell me how many bodies of Kings and Emperors have been able to retain their dignity?

10.—Having left the body in the grave, then follow the soul and see the road she takes through that new country which will be her everlasting home, and watch her trial. Imagine thyself present before the judgment-seat in the midst of the whole court of heaven awaiting the result of the trial, where everything received to the least tittle will be charged and discharged. There an account will be demanded of the whole life, of all the estate and property, of the inspirations of God, of the means furnished us to lead a good life and above all of the blood of Christ and of the use of the sacraments, and then each will be sentenced according to the account he can give of what he has received.

11.—At the conclusion of the meditation make an act of thanksgiving, an offering and petition as mentioned before in the second chapter.

CHAPTER X.

ON DEATH; BEING A LENGTHENED CONSIDERATION OF THE
SUBJECT AS OPENED IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER.

§ 1.—*On three important points which are of great assistance in meditating upon death.*

1.—The contemplation of death is very profitable for many reasons and for three especially. First to gain true

wisdom, which consists in the knowledge of how to govern and regulate our lives. Because, according to philosophers, in actions directed to a particular end, we should be guided by the rules and means that lead to that end. Hence the builder, the sailor, in fact all who seek to carry out any design, always fix their eyes on the object they have in view and make everything else subservient to that. As then at the close of life death is a thing certain to await us, he who wishes to travel through life with safety, should fix his eyes on that target and never swerve from the direct line towards it. See how poor and naked thou hast to go out hence, and what a severe trial thou hast to undergo, and how trodden-down and forgotten thou hast to be in the grave, and then see that thou regulatest thy life accordingly. Thus wilt thou act like the philosopher who said, "Naked I came out from my mother's womb and naked I go back to the grave." Why then do I seek to lose time in gathering riches, if at the end I am to be stript of them? From not having this end always in view, all our errors spring. Hence arises our presumption, our pride, our covetousness, and our daintiness and the castles in the air which we build upon sand. For did we only consider what sort of a figure we shall make a few days hence in this our poor dwelling-house, our lives would be more humble and more temperate. Who would be arrogant did he there see himself but dust and ashes? Who would make a god of his belly did he there see himself the food of worms? Who would puff up his thoughts so high if he only saw the hollow foundation on which they rested? Who would traverse sea and land in quest of riches did he see the return was only a poor shroud? In fine all our actions would be changed if we were guided by this rule.

2.—For this reason have philosophers said, that the life of a wise man was a constant contemplation of death. Because this teaches man what is something and what is nothing, what he should do and what he should not do in conformity

with the end of his career. It is written of the Brahmin philosophers who are in the habit of meditating on this subject, that they have their graves open in the threshold of their houses, to remind them always when they enter and when they go out, of what they are ultimately to come to. God told the prophet Jeremiah to go down into the potter's

Jer. xviii. house as he wished to speak to him there. God could well have conversed with his prophet in any other place, but he wished to speak to him there to shew that the house of clay, which is the grave, is the school of true wisdom in which the Almighty is wont to instruct his own in his doctrines. There, he teaches how great is the vanity of the world, the misery of the flesh, the shortness of life and above all, there he teaches men to know themselves, one of the highest points of philosophy that there is to learn. Go down then, oh man, in spirit into this house, and there thou shalt see who thou art, and of what thou art, and in what thou art to end, and in what ends the beauty of the flesh and the glory of the world, and thus wilt thou learn to despise all that the world adores from not knowing how to regard it: for the world only looks at the face of Jezabel who appears at the window

Kings vi. decked in loveliness, and sees not her miserable extremities, which after her body was devoured, God wished should remain entire, in order to shew us how different the world is from what it seems, and in order that we may so behold its face, as at the same time to bear in mind its wretched extremities in which all its glory terminates.

3.—Secondly this consideration helps to detach us from sin, as the preacher testifies, saying, "Remember thy last end
Eccle. vii. and thou shall never sin." 'Tis a great thing not to sin, and the great antidote against sin is for man to remember that he has to die. St. John Chimacus writes of a monk, who having been grievously tempted by the beauty of a woman whom he had seen in the world, happening to hear of her death went to her grave and rubbed a hand-

kerchief over the dead carcase, and whenever afterwards the devil suggested to him the wicked thought, he put the handkerchief to his nose, saying, "See here, wretch, what thou lovest, and see here how end the pleasures and beauties of the world." This was a powerful remedy against sin, and not less is the serious consideration of death, according to that of St. Gregory, "There is nothing which so mortifies the appetite of this unruly flesh as the reflection, what it will be itself when dead." The same saint makes mention of another monk who when sitting down to take some refreshment for his exhausted body, was suddenly impressed with the thought of death; and as if the thought had been an officer of justice, he shook and trembled to that degree as to abandon his meal. Behold how on the heart of a good man this thought can weigh so heavy, as to cause him to abstain from so innocent an act and one so necessary to sustain his existence.

4.—Truly it is most astonishing that men should know for a certainty the account which will be demanded of them at that hour and still persevere in sinning with such ease. If a traveller with only a penny in his purse entered a tavern and seating himself at the table ordered partridges, poultry and capons, in fact the best the house contained, and supped to his heart's content without thinking of or considering the time of reckoning, who would not take him for a knave or a fool? Then what folly can be greater than that of those who plunge so wildly into all sorts of vices and sleep so comfortably over them, without thinking that so soon and so near, at the door of the tavern, a strict account of all that extravagance will be demanded?

5.—On this account doubtless the devil labours so hard to make us lose this remembrance, because he well knows how much we should profit by it; otherwise how would it be possible for men to forget so terrible and dreadful a calamity and one so certain to fall upon them? The fear of losing a small estate or any similar thing will oftentimes keep us awake all

night and occasion both loss of sleep and health : how is it then that the remembrance of death does not, death being both for body and soul the most horrible calamity that can happen ? 'Tis a miracle to me that man so careful about trifles should be so utterly reckless about the one thing necessary.

6.—Thirdly this consideration is not only profitable for a good life, as we have said, but also for a good death. Forethought is of great use in all arduous and difficult matters. A great leap like that of death, a leap that bounds from this life to another, cannot be safely taken without starting a long way back and taking a long run. Difficult things are never well done at the first attempt. Then since death is a matter of such vast importance and since it is so necessary to die so well, let us often die during life that when the hour of death comes we may know how to die well. A nation liable to be involved in war learns and practices in time of peace what will be necessary to do in time of war. The rider who has to ride a race first walks over and examines the course, noting the different turns and slopes that he may not feel strange and at a loss at the time of the race ; and since we have all to ride this race, (as there is no man living who shall not see death), and the course is so rough and uneven as we all know, and the danger so great that he who falls must tumble into the depths of hell ; it would be well for us to examine carefully the route step by step, as there is much to look out for. But let us not rest satisfied with seeing what passes externally round the bed of the sick man but rather let us endeavour to fathom what is passing in his heart.

§ 2.—*On the uncertainty of the hour of death and on the pain of the separation from everything.*

7.—To begin then at the beginning of this battle. See how death when it comes, will come when thou art most secure, and as commonly happens, when least expected.

Thes. v.

“The day of the Lord, says the Apostle, will

come like a thief who takes care always to come when men are off their guard and are secure, the better to make his attack." Thus then it most frequently happens, at the time when a man least reckons upon dying and is most forgetful of it, when he is engaged in arranging in advance his future occupations or in planning occupation for many days and years, that death suddenly overtakes him, cuts the thread of all his hopes and ravings and makes a mockery of all human projects. Thus is accomplished what was said by that wise King, "My life was
Psalm xxxvii. cut off like the web which the weaver cuts before its time, since scarce had he begun to weave, when at the time it was warped it was cut."

8.—The fear of dying is usually the first blow struck by death. A hard hit for him who loves his life. Such pain is conveyed by this word that oftentimes worldly friends smother it without considering the injury thereby inflicted on the miserable soul. King Saul had a brave heart, but after the
I Kings xxviii. ghost of Samuel appeared to him and told him he would die in the battle and added, saying, "On the morrow thou and thy sons shall see yourselves here with me," so struck was he with fear and dread, that in a moment losing all his strength he fell upon the ground, as dead. What then will the lover of this life feel when he receives the like tidings? Then will he figure to himself the eternal separation and banishment from this world and all that it contains. Then will man see that his hour is come, and that the day has dawned upon his house, the day on which he has to sever himself from all he loves in this life. The body will die but once, but the heart as often as it numbers the dear things it has to lose, since the knife of death will sever it from them all. The deeper the tooth is fastened in the jaw, the greater the pain in extracting it. As then the heart of the wicked is so rooted in the love of the things of this life, it cannot but feel great anguish when the hour comes for its separation from each of them. Then the things most loved will wound

the heart most acutely and that which has been looked upon hitherto as the solace of its sufferings, will then be its most cruel executioner. St. Augustin relates that when he contemplated separating himself from the world and all its pleasures, it seemed to him as if they all arranged themselves before him and addressed him. How? And are you going to desert us for ever, and are we never more to see you? Do thou then consider what thy carnal heart will feel when those that it most loves place themselves before it at that hour, and it sees itself despoiled of all so as to be obliged to cry out; "Now there is no world left for me, no air, nor sun, nor heaven for me, no wife or children or pleasures for me. I am stript of all, now death despoils me of everything. My turn is now come, the number of my days is complete; now shall I die to all things and all things to me. Then, oh world, I commit thee to God: my inheritance and my estate I commit to God. My friends, my wife, my children I leave you to God for in this mortal flesh we shall see each other no more."

9.—There is still another separation even more fearful than this, that of the soul from the body its long and so much cherished companion. The devil had despoiled Holy Job of everything but life, and it seemed to him in comparison with that that all the rest was trivial and he thus spoke, "Skin for skin and all that a man has he will give for his life." This is what he naturally loves most and the separation from which he feels most. If the parting of two travellers though only companions for a short time causes sorrow and a feeling of loneliness, what will the parting of two such intimate friends and companions as the soul and the body which have travelled together from their mother's womb up to that hour and are knit together by so many acts of mutual kindness? What will it be when the spirit shall say to the flesh, "Without thee I stand alone?" And the flesh shall say to the spirit, "Shall I then continue thus without thee since of thee I received my very being?"

10.—After this it naturally occurs to the dying man to consider where his body will be left after its separation from the soul. He then sees its fate at best is only a small grave. He is astonished at so mean a lot as this, because considering on the one hand in what estimation he held his body and seeing on the other, in what a bare and miserable hole it has to remain, he cannot avoid being filled with amazement. He sees how narrow is the home prepared for it in the earth, how dark and how loathsome, the companion of worms and the bones and skulls of the dead and how horrible even to be looked at by the living. And as he sees that body which he used to treat so daintily, and that belly which he made his god, and that palate to whose pleasures the earth and sea were made tributary, and that flesh for whose clothing gold and silk were woven, and which was provided with a white and downy bed, have to be thrown on so miserable a dunghill, there crawled upon and devoured by worms, and reduced to the same end as the hack that dies in the field, at which the passer-by holds his nose and hurries past out of the stench. When he reflects on all this and sees after the soft bed the hard earth, after the sweet perfumes dust and filth, and instead of so many meats and servants, such worms and devourers, he cannot, if he retain any of his faculties, cease to be astonished at seeing to what a base end so noble a nature can descend, and with whom that, in one hour is made equal, which so unequally spent the entire term of life.

11.—Wise men are not apt to wonder, and the frequent recurrence of great events prevents them occasioning surprise, yet with all this the wise man was filled with astonishment at this misery though of daily and such frequent recurrence,

Eccle. ii. 3. when he says, "If the manner of the death of man and of beast be one, what doth it profit to have laboured much in seeking after wisdom?" If the body in this separation retained some value or were of any use, it would be some consolation; but it is a subject for wonder

minds the severity of God's judgments and the rigour of his justice which refused to pardon his own son on account of the sins of others. If, they will say, he does this in the green wood what will he do in the dry? Then will the wicked man begin to tremble and to say within himself, wretched creature that I am! If that be true which the Scriptures every where proclaim, that God will render to each one according to his works, I who have done such works of sin, what have I to expect? If the Gospel says that the tree shall be judged by its fruits, for him who has produced such fruits as mine, what sentence is to be expected? If the prophet says no man shall ascend the mountain of God who has not innocent hands and a clean heart, I whose hands are so guilty and whose heart so filthy, where

shall I go? If the wise man says that he who shuts his ears not to hear the law, shall cry out and shall not be heard, what can he hope for who has so closed his ears against the Word of God and opened them to the lies of the world? Then O my God, with what face shall I appear before thee and beg of thee to hear me, since thou hast called to me so often and I heard thee not? How shall I ask thee to receive me into thy house, since so often when thou hast called at mine I closed the door in thy face? How shall I find thee now in the time of need, when so often when thou wast in want of me, thou didst not find me? With what claim can I ask thee at the end of the day's work to admit me into heaven, having spent all my life in the service of thy enemy? Oh how justly canst thou then say to me O Lord, "Thou hast served the world and the devil, look to them for thy reward." Thus

answered the Prophet Eliseus to King Joram, who having spent all his life in the service and worship of idols, in the time of his necessities applied to the prophet of God for assistance; and thus answered the prophet, saying, "Go, look to the prophets of thy father and thy mother whom thou hast followed and call on them for assistance now." O how much we resemble this bad king both in life and death. During life we serve the

world and in death we call upon God. What answer then canst thou expect in that hour, but the same which has already been given under similar circumstances? What hast thou to do with me, since thou hast never served me? Away, look to those counsellors whose advice thou hast followed, to those idols thou hast loved and served and adored, and bid them pay thee for thy services. "When thou criest out; says the Lord by Isaiah, let thy supporters come to thy help, all of whom the wind and the air shall blow and carry away."

15.—Here man begins to wish for time for repentance and imagines were that given him, he would not be content with any sort of penance, but would undergo the bitterest in the world, and as he sees no further time is granted, and calls to mind the time and opportunities he once had, and how he allowed them to pass idly by, bitter will be the regret for this loss accompanied by the knowledge that this punishment is but a just reward for him who made such poor use of the time he had. O how many of us act in this foolish manner, we spend the time given us by God in vanity and folly, and only miss it when we stand in need of it. Thus our fortune resembles that of the young pages of the palace who receive a candle to light them to bed which they burn over play during the night and have afterwards to grope their way to bed in the dark.

§ 5.—*On extreme unction and the last agony.*

16.—The disease having reached its crisis, the church begins to assist her children with prayers and the sacraments and all her aids. And as the necessity is so pressing, (for at that moment the destiny of an eternity is determined), she hastens to call upon all the saints to her assistance in such a crisis. What else is that litany which she then orders to be recited for the dying, but because like a tender mother pressed by her child's danger she knocks at every gate of heaven, and begs of all the saints to interpose as petitioners before the divine presence for the salvation of the unfortunate sinner.

17.—Then the priest anoints all the senses and limbs of the sick man praying God to forgive him all his sins committed through the medium of each of them. Thus anointing the eyes he says; “May the Lord by this holy anointing, and by his own most tender mercy pardon thee whatever sin thou hast committed by thy sight.” And in a similar manner he anoints all the others. Then if the wretched sinner has sinned with his eyes, or his tongue or any of his other senses, and all these past sins present themselves at that time before him, and sees the little fruit they have left him, how can he escape feeling unutterable anguish? What would he not give never to have raised his eyes off the earth, never to have opened his mouth to utter a bad word?

18.—After this follows the agony of death, the greatest struggle of life. When the lighted taper and the shroud are ready and the sick man is told that the hour for his departure is at hand and to commend himself to God and to invoke the assistance of his blessed Mother, the help of those who call upon her in that hour; when the cries and groans of his poor wife as she begins to feel the sorrows and loneliness of her new widowhood ring in his ears; when the soul begins to struggle out of the body and in the act of her flight each member feels the pang of separation; then are all her agonies renewed, then she has to combat and to struggle, not so much against her departure but with the terrors of the hour of reckoning which is at hand. Here is room for fear and trembling even for the bravest. The blessed Hilarion finding himself at this point began to tremble and to shrink from death but the holy man thus encouraged himself saying: “Go forth my soul, go forth, what dost thou fear? Seventy years thou hast served Christ and dost thou still fear death?” If he who had so long served Christ thus dreaded this pass, what must he do who has perhaps sinned against him for as many years? Where will he go? On whom will he call? What counsel will he take? Oh that men could understand the extent of this per-

plexity and anxiety! I pray thee now to imagine how the heart of the Patriarch Isaac would beat when his father held him on the faggots bound hand and foot ready for sacrifice.

Gen. xxii.

Above he saw the gleaming knife of his father, below the flames of the burning fire, the servants who might have helped him had stopped at the foot of the mountain, he was bound hand and foot unable to flee or to defend himself. How then would the heart of that holy youth beat when he thus saw himself? But much more streightened will the soul of the wicked be at that hour, for on what side soever she looks, she sees nothing but cause for fear and tribulation. If she looks up, she beholds the threatening sword of divine justice, if down, the grave yawning open to receive her, if within, there is her conscience stinging. If she looks around her, she imagines angels and devils each watching and hoping for their prize. If she turns her eyes back upon the world, she sees there still servants and relatives and estate, but they are not for her assistance, she alone is leaving life, all the rest remain as they were. Lastly if after all she turns her eyes within and looks at herself, she trembles at the sight; and were it possible would flee from herself. The past will appear as a breath of air, but the future, infinite. What then will the hapless creature do surrounded by such troubles? O the folly and blindness of the children of Adam who neglect to provide against such an event whilst yet there is time!

§ 6.—*On the foulness of the body after death, on the burial, on the grave and on the departure of the soul.*

19.—Lastly, after this protracted struggle, the soul quits the body and goes forth from her old dwelling whilst the body remains deprived of all that gave it value.

20.—Let us now contemplate the fate of each, and first that of the body after the soul has left it. What more honoured during life than the body of a Prince, and what more despised and vile than the same after death? Where is

that ancient majesty, that comeliness, that authority, that frown that caused all to tremble, that approach on bended knees and with such show of reverence? How quickly does all that pomp dissolve like the fabric of a dream or like a farce played out in an hour!

21.—Then is the shroud prepared, the richest treasure that can be carried out of this life, with which the richest man receives his pay at last. Therefore, said the prophet with much reason, "Be not thou afraid when a man shall be made rich and when the glory of his house shall be increased, for when he shall die he shall take nothing away, nor shall his glory descend with him."

22.—Then shall they dig a hole from seven to eight feet long, though it be for Alexander the Great whom the whole world could not satisfy, and with this only the body then rests content. There is its home for ever, there its perpetual abode with the rest of the dead, there the worms crawl out to welcome it; and there it is ultimately left in a poor sheet, the face covered with a handkerchief, the feet and hands tied together to little purpose, for it is quite safe not to fly from its prison and can defend itself against no one. There the earth receives it into her bosom and the bones of the departed welcome it in peace, and the ashes of those who have gone before embrace and invite it to that table and that home which is the destiny of every living being. And the last honour the world can then bestow is to throw over it a coat of clay and cover it well that the passers-by may not gaze upon its foulness and its dishonour. And the greatest kindness the dearest friends can shew it is to honour it with a handful of earth. The faithful are in the habit of performing this ceremony over the dead in the hopes that God will provide some one to do as much for them. What greater exhibition could there be of our misery, than the sight of men thus anticipating their own want of so small a favour? Oh, avarice of the living and poverty of the dead that so much should be coveted for so short a life when so little is expected to satisfy at the last hour!

23.—Then the sexton with his spade and rammer begins to turn over bones on bones and to batten down the well-beaten earth. Thus the loveliest face, the most cared for and protected against the sun and weather will be crushed under the rammer of the rough grave-digger, who cares not to smash in its forehead and crack its skull, to punch in its eyes and nose that it may lie flat in the ground; and on that fine gentleman, who was too delicate and dainty during life for the air to breathe upon, and off whose clothes every speck of lint must be brushed, they will cast a midden of dirt; and that other who strutted redolent of amber and perfumes will find himself covered with filth and worms. This then is the end of the gay dresses and of all the pride of the world.

24.—Thus will its friends leave it housed in that narrow dwelling, in that land of oblivion and that darksome prison in the company of eternal solitude. Oh world, what is thy glory! Riches, what is your power! Friends, where have you left me? How is it such ancient fellowship has so suddenly vanished? How is the wheel of such prosperity so suddenly broken?

IV. Kings, ix. Those who saw Queen Jezabel, by the righteous judgment of God devoured by dogs, and that nought remained of all her beauty but the skull and the extremities of her feet and hands, as they had before known her encircled by such glory and then saw her in such a plight, filled with wonder at so great a change, asked each other saying, "Is this that same Jezabel?" And all who past by that way and saw her body made the food of dogs, repeated the exclamation, "Is this that same Jezabel?" Is this that great queen and princess of Israel? Is this the powerful one who enriched herself with the estates of her vassals at the price of their blood? Can death drag down the powerful so low?

25.—Descend now O brother in spirit into the tombs of the princes and great lords of whom thou hast heard or whom thou hast known in this world, and see the horrible and shape-

less mass lying there and thou wilt see, that thou also hast good reason to exclaim in the same words and cry out, "Is this that same Jezabel?" Is this that same face I so well knew in life? Are these those bright eyes? Is this that merry tongue? Is this that graceful form? Do crowns and sceptres end in this? Is this the end of the glory of the world? "Oh," says a wise man, "whenever I chance to stray amongst the sepulchres of some of the dead, amazed and astonished at all before me, I fix my eyes on some figure near me, my limbs tremble and with clasped hands and quivering lips I say within myself: see those feet, what journies they have travelled! those hands, how much they have grasped and saved! those eyes, what vanities they have looked on! what gluttony has revelled in that mouth! and what castles in the air has that skull built! For the gratification of that dust and shrivelled skin what sins have been committed for which the soul of that body perhaps at this moment is suffering pains which will endure for ever! I rush aghast from the place and meeting other men, I fix my eyes on them and wonder whether they and I with them will not soon have to see ourselves in the same predicament and in the same abasement. Then oh wretch that I am! what avail riches if here I am to lie so naked? What gay clothes and ornaments since here I am so squalid? Of what avail feasts and pleasures since I am here to be the food of worms?"

26.—Let us now leave the body in the sepulchre and follow the soul on its journey to that new world which is like another hemisphere with a new sky and a new earth and another sort of life and another kind of knowledge and understanding. Freed from the flesh she enters into this new region where the living have never trod, full of fear and covered with the shadow of death. What will this stranger do in that foreign land, if in this life she has not secured for that hour a guard of angels for her protection? "Oh my soul," says St. Bernard, "how wilt thou feel on that day when alone thou enterest that un-

known country where thou wilt encounter on the road such terrible and tremendous monsters ! Who will protect thee ? Who defend thee ? Who will deliver thee from the lions raging with hunger and waiting to devour thee ?”

27.—Fearful indeed is the road but still more dreadful the trial to be there held. Who can tell how closely woven will be the web of justice, how severe the judge, how zealous the prosecutors, how few the friends, how minute the account, how long the scrutiny of our life ? If then the just man, according to St. Peter, shall with difficulty be saved, where will the sinner, where the wicked appear ? And 'tis well worthy of our notice that in this our great need, what we have most loved and most reckoned upon to help us, will not only be of no use but will most contribute to embarrass us. What

II Kings xiv. xviii. the beautiful Absalom most loved and valued was his hair, and that God ordained, as a fitting judgment, should be the cause of his death. This same judgment awaits the wicked at that hour, what they most valued in life and for the love of which they most offended God, shall then throw the deepest doubt upon their case and give them the greatest torture. Then those sons whom right or wrong we would enrich, then that wicked wife for love of whom we broke the laws of God, then that estate and honour, and those pleasures which were our idols, shall prove our executioners and shall most cruelly torment us. Then shall God execute his judgments against all the gods of Egypt commanding that those things in which we had gloried should there be the cause of our perdition.

28.—The stroke of that divine sentence, if in conformity with our offences, who dare await it ? One of the fathers of the desert said, there were three things of which he lived in dread. First the departure of the soul from the body, second when she had to appear before the judgment seat of God, and thirdly when her sentence had to be pronounced. But beyond all, what if at last there fall upon thee the sentence of eternal

damnation? What will thy troubles then be? And what a day of rejoicing for thy enemies! Then how those words of the prophet will be fulfilled, "Thy enemies have opened their mouths against thee and have hissed and gnashed their teeth
Psalm xii. and have said, we will devour him; this is the day we looked for, we have found it, we have seen it."

29.—But thou, oh good Jesus, enlighten the eyes of my soul, that I may never sleep in death, that my enemy may never say, "I have prevailed against him." Amen.

CHAPTER XI.

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY NIGHT, ON THE LAST JUDGMENT.

1.—Having made the sign of the cross with the preparation mentioned in the second chapter, the subject of thy meditation shall be the last judgment to awaken in thy soul two sentiments which should specially characterize every faithful christian, the love of God and a horror of sin.

2.—Consider then first the terrors of that day of trial for all the children of Adam when the career of every man's life shall be closed and the final sentence shall be pronounced never to be altered.

3.—That day will embrace in itself all the days of ages past present and to come, for on that day the whole world will render its accounts and God will pour forth his anger and his wrath pent up during all the ages past. With what violence then will that mighty torrent of divine indignation burst with its accumulated anger and wrath against all the sins of the whole world committed up to that time? Hence

Soph. i.

does the prophet with great reason cry out; "That day is a day of wrath, a day of tribulation and distress, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and obscurity, a day of clouds and whirlwinds, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities and against the high bulwarks."

4.—Consider secondly the dreadful signs which will precede that day, because as our Saviour himself says;

Luke xxi.

“Before that day shall come there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon and in the stars,” and finally in all created things both in heaven and on earth, for all shall feel their end before it comes, and shall tremble and shall begin to fall down before the general crash. “But men,” he adds, “shall wither away from fear of death at hearing the roar of the sea and the lashing of the mighty waves,” imagining thence to themselves the dreadful calamities and miseries foreboded to the whole world by such terrible signs. Thus they shall walk staggering with fear, with faces wan and panic-stricken; dead before death, condemned before trial, measuring their danger by their fears; each one so absorbed by his own case as to have no thoughts for another, not a father for his son, nor a son for his father. No one will help another, for no one will suffice for himself. The Sibils tell us that in those days the wild beasts will prowl over the fields and through the cities, that the trees will sweat blood and that the sea will throw up its fishes upon the dry land; but if they are no authority, the prophet tells us much worse, for it is more dreadful for man to wither away, than for the sea to dry up, and worse for the powers of heaven to tremble, than for all the created things of earth.

5.—Consider thirdly that universal deluge of fire which shall precede the Judge and the dreadful blast of the trumpet which the angel shall blow to summon to one place all the generations of man to present themselves for judgment, and above all the awful majesty of the Judge described by the Prophet Nahum in these words: “The Lord’s ways are in a

Nahum i.

tempest and in a whirlwind, and clouds are the dust of his feet, he rebuketh the sea and drieth it up; and bringeth all the rivers to be a desert. Basan languisheth and Carmel; and the flower of Lebanon fadeth away. The mountains tremble at him and the hills are made desolate;

and the earth hath quaked at his presence, and the world and all that dwell therein. Who shall stand before the face of his indignation? And who shall resist in the fierceness of his anger? His indignation is poured out like fire, and the rocks are melted by him."

6.—Consider afterwards how strict will be the account then demanded of each one. Truly as is said in the Book of Job, "Man cannot be justified if he compares himself with

Job xiv. 15.

God, and if he desire to set himself up in judgment before him, of the thousand charges against him he will be unable to answer one." Then what will each of the wicked feel when God shall enter into this scrutiny with him and his own conscience shall at the same time accuse him. Look here wretched creature, what sawest thou in me that thou shouldst thus have despised me and past over to my enemy? I raised thee out of the dust of the earth and I created thee after my own image and likeness, I gave thee strength and help to enable thee to obtain the reward of my glory; but thou despising my favours and my commands which I imposed on thee for the guidance of thy life, hast preferred the lying ways of the deceiver to the saving counsels of thy Lord. To deliver thee from the consequences of thy fall, I descended from heaven to the earth and suffered the greatest torments and affronts. For thee I fasted, journeyed, watched, laboured, and sweated drops of blood. For thee I suffered persecutions, stripes, blasphemies, scoffs, buffetings, tortures, dishonour and the cross. For thee was I born in poverty, past a life of toil and died a death of agony. These are my witnesses, this cross and nails which are here; these wounds still apparent in my feet and hands are witnesses; heaven and earth before which I suffered are witnesses: the sun and moon which at that hour hid their light are witnesses. What then hast thou done with that soul of thine purchased by me with my own blood? To whose service hast thou devoted what I purchased at such a price? Oh foolish and

adulterous generation! Why wouldst thou serve this thy enemy with pain, rather than me thy Creator and Redeemer with gladness? Be astonished, oh ye heavens! and let fall your gates with dread, for my people have committed a double

Jer. ii. 12.

iniquity. They have forsaken me the foun-

John xviii. 40.

tain of living waters, and they have forsaken

Ps. i.

me for another Barabbas. I called ye so

often and ye answered me not. I knocked at your doors and ye would not awake. I stretched out my hands upon the cross and ye turned away your faces: you have held in contempt my counsels my promises and my threats. Speak out then now ye angels, judge ye, be ye the judges between me and my vineyard, what more ought I to have done for it than I have done?

7.—What answer then shall the wicked make, those who have sneered at divine things, the scoffers at virtue, those who despised the simple, who set more value on the laws of the world than upon the law of God, who were always deaf to his voice, insensible to his inspirations, rebels against all his commandments, and ungrateful and hardened in return for all his stripes and all his mercies? What answer will they make, both those who lived as though they believed not in a God, and those who set at defiance every law but that of self-interest? "Such as ye, what will ye do" says Isaiah, "in the day of the visitation and calamity which is approaching from afar?" From whom will ye ask for assistance? What will your riches avail you to prevent your being carried away in irons and cast amongst the dead?

8.—Consider then the terrible sentence the judge will fulminate against the wicked and that dreadful word that will ring in the ears of all who hear it. "His lips" says Isaiah, "are full of indignation and his tongue as devouring fire." What fire will burn like these words? "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." This is the most dreadful sentence that can be past upon any created being, for this

departure involves the punishment which is called the pain of loss, that is an absolute spoliation of all things and deprivation of His sovereign goodness who in Himself comprises everything that is good. Where then shall they go Oh Lord, who are thus separated from thee? In what port shall they find shelter? Who shall be their Lord? Those who are banished from thee shall be denizens of earth, because they have forsaken thee the fountain of living waters, that is they have forsaken the Lord their God. The severest punishment inflicted upon a Roman citizen for the greatest crime was banishment from the noble City of Rome and from its privileges to some distant land amongst barbarous nations. If absence from Rome was such a punishment, what will absence from God be and from his elect, and banishment for ever to the company of Satan and the barbarians of hell?

9.—“Depart from me,” he says, “ye cursed,” as if he were to say; I besought ye to take my blessing, but ye would not; take now my curse upon you. “The wicked man,” says

Psalm cviii.

the prophet, “loved cursing, and it shall come upon him, and he would not have the blessing and it shall be far from him.” God cursed the fig tree, and not only

Mat. xxi.

the leaves withered, but the trunk also so that it could never again bear fruit; and in this manner will his curse encompass the wicked, depriving them of every hope of salvation, and of every fruit and merit for ever and ever.

10.—But where, oh Lord, hast thou sent them? To everlasting fire. What a bed for the delicate and the dainty! Which of you, says the prophet, can dwell in everlasting

Isai. xxxiii.

flames? Who can live in a blazing fire?

What malediction can be worse than this? What calamity, what sentence, what misfortune can be compared with even the shadow of this? This is that terrible and dreadful fire which the Prophet Isaiah so vividly paints in the words,

Isai. xxxiv.

“The streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the ground thereof into brimstone, and the land

thereof shall become burning pitch. Night and day it shall not be quenched, the smoke thereof shall go up for ever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste, none shall pass through it for ever and ever."

11.—Having finished the meditation make an act of thanksgiving, an oblation and petition as mentioned before in the second chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE LAST JUDGMENT; BEING A MORE LENGTHENED CONSIDERATION OF THE SUBJECT OF THE LAST MEDITATION.

§ 1.—*On the great effect produced in the soul by the fear of God and in order to this, on the advantages of the consideration and remembrance of the divine judgments and particularly of the last judgment which will take place at the end of the world.*

1.—Great are the effects produced in the soul by the fear of God. "He that feareth God," says the Preacher "shall
Eccles. ii. go well in his latter days, and on the day of his death a blessing shall come upon him." And in another place, "How great is he who has reached the height of wisdom and knowledge: but great though he be, he is not greater than him who feareth God, because the fear of God takes its place above all the rest. Happy is the man to whom is given the fear of the Lord. To whom shall I compare him? Because the fear of God is the beginning of the love of God." All these words are the words of the Preacher, by which it clearly appears how the fear of God is the beginning of all that is good, that is of the love of him, and not only the beginning but the key and guard of every other good, as St. Bernard bears testimony when he says, "Truly I know of nothing so efficacious for preserving divine grace as living at all times in fear and with our thoughts directed upwards."

2.—As a means to secure this precious treasure, it will be found extremely serviceable to consider and constantly bear

in remembrance the divine judgments and especially that final judgment which will take place at the end of the world. This is the most terrible fact announced in Holy Writ; for so frightful is the description given of this day, that if God himself had not spoken, it would be utterly beyond belief. Wherefore our Lord having told his Disciples some of the things which were then to come to pass, because the magnitude of them seemed to exceed all the common powers of belief in man, finished the account of them with this asseveration, saying; "Verily I say unto you this generation shall not
Mark xiii. pass away until all these things be fulfilled, heaven and earth shall pass away but my word shall not pass away."

3.—In the Acts of the Apostles it is written, that whilst
Acts xiv. St. Paul was preaching on the events of this day before the Prefect of Judea, the Prefect himself began to tremble at the words of the Apostle, though being a Gentile he placed neither faith nor credit in the mystery; whence it appears how terrible were the doctrines preached by the Apostle, since the mere sound of them sufficed to rouse such fear and trembling even in an unbeliever. As for the Christian then who believes them as a matter of faith, what limit can there be to his feelings on the subject?

4.—And let not any one think to excuse himself as innocent and say, these threats are not intended for me but for the unjust and wicked; because, St. Jerome was a just man, nevertheless he was wont to say that whenever he thought of the day of judgment he trembled in both soul and body. David was also a just man, and a man after God's own heart, but with all that he so much dreaded the account of that day, as to say in one
Psaln cxlii. of the Psalms, "Enter not into judgment, oh Lord, with thy servant, for in thy sight no man living shall be justified." The most virtuous Job was also a just man, nevertheless such was the fear in which he lived, that he says
Job xxxi. of himself, "As the sailor fears in the midst

of the storm, when he sees the furious waves swelling over him, thus have I always feared the majesty of God; and so great was my fear that his weight I was not able to bear." But above all the Apostle St. Paul was a most just man,

I Cor. iv. 4.

nevertheless he said, "For I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord." As if he had said, oftentimes our own eyes may be unable to detect any stain upon our actions, but the eye of God may detect it, for what is hidden from the eyes of man is not hidden from the eye of God. To an ordinary artist, the painting he has just finished may seem very perfect, but a first-rate painter would discover many blemishes. How many then will be found by that supreme goodness and infinite wisdom in a creature so inclined to evil as man, who, as is written in the Book of Job, "Sucks

Job xv.

up iniquity like water?" And if the sword of God found so much to cut down in heaven; how much more will it find upon earth which raises only thistles and thorns? Who shall manage to keep every corner of his soul so swept and clean as not to need to cry out with the prophet,

Psalms xviii.

"From my secret sins deliver me oh Lord?"

5.—Thus then it behoves all to live in fear of this day, however just may be their lives; since the day is so fearful, and life so culpable, the Judge so just, and above all so profound in his judgments, that no one knoweth the fate that will befall him, but as our Saviour says, "Two men shall be

Luke xvii.

in the field, the one shall be taken and the other shall be left. There shall be two men in one bed, the one shall be taken and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together in one mill, the one shall be taken and the other shall be left." By which words we are to understand, that from each state and condition of life, some shall be carried to heaven and some to hell, for no one can hold himself to be secure whilst still living in this world.

§ 2.—*On the severity of the trial on the day of judgment.*

6.—In reflecting on the awful character of this judgment, first bear in mind that no tongue can adequately describe the very least of the troubles of this day.

7.—Hence the Prophet Joel being desirous of proclaiming
Joel i. its greatness found himself so disconcerted and embarrassed with the subject, that he began to stammer like a child, and cry out, "Ah, ah, ah, what shall that day be!" The same kind of language did Jeremiah use when God wished to send him to preach; to shew that he was a child and quite unfit for the great embassy for which God had chosen him, and the Prophet used this language to shew us that there is no human tongue but must stammer like a stuttering infant in proclaiming the events of this day.

8.—On this day God will restore to its pristine beauty all the foulness with which the wicked have filled the world by their evil doings, and as the number of these has been so great, so the restoration must be proportionably great, that the world may be rendered beautiful at the expense of evil, with the chastisement of it after the same manner that it was made foul by its iniquity. When a man stumbles and dislocates his arm, the greater the dislocation, the greater will be the pain of the setting. Since then the wicked have dislocated all things in the world, and thrown them out of joint, when the heavenly physician shall come to reinstate things with chastisement for so many crimes, how frightful will that chastisement be since so many and so great are the dislocations!

9.—This day is not only called the day of wrath but the
Joel i. day of God, as the Prophet Joel names it, to give us to understand that all other days have been the days of men, in which they followed their own will against the will of God; but this is called the day of God because on it God will act according to his own will contrary to theirs. Now, thou swearest and blasphemest, and God is silent; the

day will come, when God will break the silence of so many days and of so many injuries and will avenge his own honour. So that there are but two days in the world, the day of God, and the day of man. On his own day man is free to do as he

II Paral. xxxvi. likes, and God is silent. On it, King Seditias can command the prophet of God to be thrown into a well and fed with bits of bread and can do as it pleaseth him and God will be silent in the face of all these insults. But after this day will come another day, and God will carry away King Sedicias and deprive him of his kingdom, and will destroy Jerusalem and carry the king in irons before the king of Babylon and there will massacre all his friends and children before his sight, and after his eyes have beheld such dreadful things will order them to be put out and himself to be carried a prisoner to Babylon, and cast into a prison there to remain until death. So that as man had liberty to do in his day according to his own will without being withheld by anyone, so God will work on His day according to his own pleasure without hindrance from anyone.

§ 3.—*On the signs which shall precede the day of the final judgment.*

10.—Finally, if thou desirest to know what sort of day that day will be, stop to consider the signs that will precede it, for by the signs shalt thou know what is intended to be signified, and by the eve and the vigil shalt thou know the Feast of the day.

11.—First, when that day shall be, no man knoweth, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son so as to reveal it, but

Matt. xxiv. 36. only the Father; nevertheless it shall be

I. Tim. i. preceded by certain signs, by which men

may foresee not only the approach, but also the terrors of it;

Matt. xxiii. for as our Saviour said, "Before the day shall come, there shall be great wars and commotions through the world; nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom

against kingdom, and there shall be great earthquakes in many places, and pestilence and famine and fearful prodigies in the air and other great signs and wonders."

12.—And amidst all these calamities shall commence that persecution so often predicted, of the greatest persecutor that ever attacked the church, namely of Antichrist, who not only by force of arms and horrible tortures but also with pretended miracles, shall levy the most cruel war against the church that ever she suffered. Consider then now, as St. Gregory says, "What sort of a time that will be, when the holy martyr shall resign his limbs to an executioner, working miracles before his eyes?" "In fine so great shall be the tribulation of those days," says our Saviour, "as was never seen since the commencement of the world, nor ever shall be again. And if the mercy of God had not shortened those days, no flesh would be saved: but for the sake of the just those days will be shortened."

13.—After these there will follow other signs more dreadful as the day approaches, which will appear in the sun and the moon and the stars, of which our Lord speaks through his Prophet Ezechiel, "I will make the stars of heaven dark above thee, I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall refuse her light, and all the luminaries of the sky will I clothe in mourning, and they shall lament over thee and I will send darkness over the whole earth." With all these signs and changes in the heavens, what dost thou expect will appear upon the earth? We see in a commonwealth, when the head of the ruler is turned with folly that all the inferior members are thrown into turmoil and confusion, and the whole State heaves with the clash of arms and dissensions. If the body of this world be regulated by the powers of the heavens, when they are overturned and thrown out of their natural order, what will become of its members and parts? Thus the air will be filled with lightning and whirlwinds and fiery comets. The earth will be filled with yawning rents and with

such frightful quakings as not only to overthrow houses and the loftiest towers, but even mountains and rocks will be split and shaken from their foundations. But the sea beyond all the elements will be agitated, and its waves will run so high and furious as to threaten to overwhelm all the earth. Its swelling will terrify the inhabitants of the coasts and its roaring those at a distance.

14.—In those days how will man demean himself! how astounded, how bewildered, lost to every feeling, speechless, and reckless of everything! Our Saviour informs us, that then shall nations be in great distress and men shall be parched and fainting unto death from very dread of the evils about to fall upon the world. What is this? Shall they say, What mean these tokens? When are these labour-pains of the world to cease? In what will all these whirlpools and universal changes end? Thus will mankind walk terrified and fainting, their hearts sunk within them and their arms hung down, gazing vacantly at each other; and they will be so terror-stricken at beholding themselves so disfigured as to faint away solely from fear. All business and employments will be at an end and with them the study and desire of gain, for fear will so fill their hearts that not only will these things be forgotten but even eating and drinking and all that is necessary to sustain life. All their anxiety will be to find some secure shelter against the earthquakes tempests and swellings of the ocean; thus men will hide themselves in the dens of wild beasts, whilst the wild beasts will seek for cover in the habitations of men, and thus will everything be overthrown and filled with confusion. The evils present to their sight will trouble them, but much more will be the fear of those to follow, for none shall know where these dreadful beginnings are to stop. Words do not suffice to describe this tragedy and all that can be said will fall short of the reality. We see even in these our days when the sea is agitated by a frightful storm, or the earth is swept by a hurricane or shaken

by an earthquake how terrified and panic-stricken men are, how feeble and bereft of judgment; when then heaven and earth and the sea and air are all in wild commotion and each element is lashed with its own peculiar tempest; when the sun is darkened and the moon crimsoned like blood and the stars are falling from the firmament, who will eat, who will sleep, who will have a moment of rest in the midst of such a storm? Oh, the unhappy lot of the wicked threatened by all these signs, and the happy lot of the good, for whom all these things are favours and bounties, and good tidings of great joy soon to come! How joyfully shall they then sing with the

Psalm xlv. 1.

prophet: "Our God is our refuge and strength, therefore we will not fear when the earth shall be troubled; and the mountains shall be removed into the heart

Luke xxi. 29.

of the sea." "See the fig-tree, and all the trees," says our Saviour, "when they now shoot forth their fruit, you know that summer is nigh, so you also when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand." Then you can open your eyes and lift up your heads, because the day of your redemption is at hand. How full of joy then shall the good man be, and how well recompensed shall he feel are his labours! And on the other hand, how grieved shall the wicked man be and how shall he condemn all his past actions and ways!

§ 4.—*On the end of the world and the resurrection of the dead.*

15.—After all these signs will come the Judge, who will be preceded by an universal deluge of fire which will burn and reduce to ashes all the glory of the world. This fire will indicate the punishment of the wicked, and will be the beginning of the glory of the just and of those who had still to suffer for their sins in purgatory. Here will end the glory of this world, here the revolution of the heavenly bodies will be arrested and the course of the planets stayed; the generation of all things and the variations of the seasons and

all dependant on the changes of the heavens will end. And thus

Apoc. i.

does St. John in the Apocalypse, write that he saw a mighty angel clothed in a shining cloud, whose face shone as the sun and a rainbow as a crown upon his head, and his feet like pillars of fire, one of which he placed upon the sea and the other upon the earth; and, he says, this angel raised his arm towards heaven and swore by him who lives for ever and ever, that time was henceforth no more, that is, that the revolution of the heavens and all things regulated thereby were ended, and, what is more, that there was no room for repentance nor merit or demerit for the other life.

16.—After this fire according to the Apostle, shall come

II Thes. iv.

an Archangel with great power and majesty and shall sound a trumpet, which means, shall in a loud and terrible voice, which shall be heard through the whole world summon together all nations to judgment. This is that fearful voice of which St. Jerome says, "Whether I eat or drink I always seem to hear ringing in my ears that voice crying out: Arise ye dead and come to judgment!" Who can appeal from this summons? Who can refuse this judgment? Who shall not tremble at this voice? This voice shall despoil the spoils of death and make it disgorge all it has carried out of

Apoc. xx.

the world. Therefore, says St. John, shall the sea deliver up its dead, and death and hell itself shall surrender their victims. What a sight shall it be to behold the sea and the earth bringing forth on all sides such various bodies, and to see merging in one, such numerous armies and various kinds of people and nations? There shall be the Alexanders, and Xerxes and Artaxerxes, there the Dariuses and the Roman Cæsars and the most potent kings in different style and bearing, and with very different ideas to those they had in this world; and there in fine shall be gathered together all the children of Adam, each to give an account of himself and to be judged according to his works.

17.—But though all shall arise never more to die, wide shall be the difference between their respective bodies. For the bodies of the just shall arise beautiful and shining bright as the sun, but those of the wicked foul and loathsome as death itself. What joy then for the souls of the just to see all their desires fulfilled, to see joined together after so long a separation brothers so long loved and sought for? Then may the soul address the body; Oh body, faithful companion thou that hast helped to obtain for me this crown, that hast so often joined me in fasting and watching, who hast suffered the discipline and the sorrows of poverty and borne the cross of penance and the contradictions of the world! How often hast thou withheld bread from thy mouth to give it to the poor! How often hast thou stripped thyself to clothe the naked! How often hast thou given up and lost thy rights to keep peace with thy neighbour! It is right then that thou shouldst share my inheritance since thou hast helped to acquire it, and that thou shouldst be the companion of my glory as thou wast of my sufferings. Then shall faithful friends be united in all their wishes, without difference in desire or opinion, but bound with the tie of perpetual peace and conformity of will, so as to sing and cry out for ever: "See how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." But, on the other hand, what will be the anguish of the damned at beholding his body as it shall then appear dark, foul, loathsome and abominable! O cursed body, will the soul exclaim, O beginning and end of all my sorrows! O cause of my damnation! not my friend but my enemy! not my support, but persecutor! not my repose but the chain and snare that tied and lured me to perdition! O cursed taste how dear have thy revels cost me! Is this the body for which I sinned? For the gratification of this am I for ever lost? For this rotten dunghill have I sacrificed the kingdom of heaven? For this vile and filthy carcass have I lost the fruit of eternal life? O furies of hell rise against me and tear me

to pieces for I deserve this punishment! Oh accursed is the day of my unfortunate birth, since it was to be my fate to suffer eternal torments in exchange for such short and momentary pleasures!

18.—These and other frightful imprecations will the unhappy soul pour upon that body which she once loved so well. Then answer me, thou miserable soul, why dost thou hate so now what thou once loved so tenderly? Was not this piece of flesh thy beloved? Was not this belly thy God? Is not this the face thou so much cherished and guarded against the sun and air and which thou wast wont to paint with artificial colours? Are not these the arms and fingers that blazed with gold and diamonds? Is not this the body for which sea and land were ransacked for the luxurious banquet, the soft bed and precious clothing? What then has changed thy office? Who has made abominable what was once all amiable? Take notice then brother and see in what ends the pride and glory of the world with all its pleasures and delights of the body.

§ 5.—*On the coming of the Judge, on the mode of the judgment and on the witnesses and the accusers.*

19.—When all have risen again to life and assembled in one place awaiting the coming of the Judge, he, whom God

Acts x.

has appointed to judge the living and the

Luke xxi.

dead will descend from on high; and as on

Mat. xxiv.

his first coming he came in the most humble

form and meekest manner, inviting men to peace and calling them to repentance, so on his second coming he will appear clad in majesty and glory, surrounded by the principalities and powers of heaven, threatening with the fury of his wrath those who refused to accept his mercy. Here so great will be

Isai. xi.

the fear and terror of the wicked, that, according to Isaiah, they will try to hide themselves in the clefts of the rocks from the immensity of their dread of the Lord and of the glory of his Majesty when he shall come to

judge the earth. Lastly so great will this terror be, that, according to St. John, the heavens and the earth shall fly before the face of the Judge and shall not find where to hide themselves. Why do ye fly oh ye heavens? What have ye done? Why do ye fear? And if by the heavens are meant, those blessed spirits who dwell therein, ye happy spirits, created and born in grace, why fly? What have ye done? Why fear? They fear not danger to themselves, but they tremble to behold the awful majesty and wrath of the Judge enough to fill the whole heavens with horror and wonder. When the sea is roaring in the storm, he who looks on in safety from the shore is yet filled with awe and admiration; when the father of a family filled with anger is chastising his slave, his innocent child looks on in fear though he knows the anger is not directed against him. What then will the wicked do, when thus the just man quakes? If the heavens flee, what will the earth do? And if those who are immortal spirits tremble, what will those do who are clothed in flesh? And if, as the Prophet says, on that day the mountains shall melt away before the face of God, how is it that our hearts are harder than rocks since they are still unmoved?

20.—Before the Judge will be borne the royal standard of the cross in testimony of the remedy God sent to the world and that the world would not receive it. And thus will the cross justify the cause of God, and will leave the wicked without consolation or excuse. Then, says our Saviour, all the nations of the earth shall weep and mourn and beat their breasts. Oh what reason will not they then have to weep and mourn! They will weep because there is then no time for repentance, nor to fly from justice, nor to appeal against the sentence. They will weep for their past sins, for their present shame, for their future torments. They will weep for their unhappy fate, their unfortunate birth and their disastrous end. For these and a thousand other causes

will they weep and lament, as cut off on all sides without counsel and without remedy, they will according to the Evangelist, beat and strike their breasts.

21.—Then will the Judge divide the good from the bad, and he will place the goats on his left hand and the sheep upon his right. Who will those happy ones be that will find themselves in this place of honour? Punish me here Oh Lord; slay me here, torture me here, burn me here, that there I may be set on thy right hand. Then will begin the judgment, the cause of each one will then be tried, as it is written

Dan. vii.

by the Prophet Daniel, "I was attentive

Apoc. i.

and beheld until thrones were placed, and

the Ancient of days sat; his garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like clean wool; his throne like flames of fire; the wheels of it like a burning fire. A swift stream of fire issued forth from before him; thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him." "I beheld this in the vision of the night, and lo one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven." Thus far the words of Daniel, to which St. John

Apoc. xx. 12.

adds; "And I saw the great and small

standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works." Take notice here, brother, of the rule according to which thou art to be judged, take notice here of the measure and coin by which all the good thou hast done is to be calculated, and not by the foolish judgment of the world, which holds in its hand the false scales of Canaan, where virtue and vice weigh much alike.

In these books are all the actions of our lives so minutely recorded, that not even will a word that has fallen from thy lips escape being noted and set down in the registry.

Osea. xii.

recorded, that not even will a word that has

22.—But for what, thinkest thou, shall we have to render
 Job xxxi. an account? “Thou hast counted, Oh Lord,
 all the steps of my life,” says Job. Of every idle word and
 of every thought will an account be demanded, and not only
 of every thought and every word but also of every thing
 which we were bound to do but omitted to perform. If thou
 Mat. xii. shalt say: Oh Lord, “I swore not.” The
 Judge will say: “Thy son or thy servant swore, and thou
 didst not chastise him.” And we shall not only be called to
 an account for our evil deeds, but also for our good actions
 both as regards our intentions and our manner of performing
 them. Finally, according to St. Gregory, there will be required
 from each one an account of how he spent every moment of
 his life. If this be true, whence such security and heedless-
 ness in those who believe it? To what do we trust? How
 do we sit content and flatter ourselves in the midst of such
 dangers? How comes it that those who have most cause to
 fear, fear least, and those who have least cause, fear the most?
 Job was a just man according to the declaration of God
 himself, and yet lived in such great dread of this account, as to
 Job ii. cry out; “What shall I do when God shall
 arise to judge? And when he begins to question me, what
 shall I answer him?” These are the words of a truly contrite
 and sorrowful heart. “What shall I do?” he says. As if he
 should say, “One care always weighs upon me, and a nail is
 always fastened in my heart and will not let me rest; what
 shall I do? Where shall I go? What shall I answer when
 God shall enter into judgment with me?” Happy saint, why
 dost thou tremble? Why art thou in trouble? Art not thou
 he who said, I was a father to the poor, an eye to the blind,
 and feet to the lame? Art not thou he who said that in all
 thy life thy own heart could not accuse thee of wickedness?
 Since then thou art so innocent, why art thou afraid? Because
 this holy man knew well that God did not see with the eye of
 the flesh, nor judge according to the judgment of men; in

whose eyes oftentimes those things look bright that are an abomination before the Lord. Oh truly just man! and just because thou livest always in fear! My brethren, this fear condemns us for our false security, this declaration overthrows our vain confidence. Is there one amongst us whom this solicitude has deprived of a single meal or one night's rest? But such as truly feel this care as they ought to do, sometimes lose sleep and forget their meals and something even more. We read in the lives of the Fathers, how one of these holy men once observing one of his disciples laughing addressed him. "How is this? Hast not thou to render an account before the Lord of heaven and earth, and darest thou to laugh?" It seemed to this holy man that no one would dare to laugh who looked forward to the accounting day.

23.—Then there will be no lack of accusers and witnesses in the cause. For our own consciences will be the witnesses, which will cry out against us. Every created thing which we have made improper use of will rise up as a witness against us, and above all our Lord himself whom we have offended, will appear as a witness against us, as he tells us by his Mal. iii. prophet, saying, "I will be a speedy witness against sorcerers, and adulterers, and false swearers, and them that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widows and the fatherless; and oppress the stranger, and have not feared me, saith the Lord of hosts."

24.—Neither shall there be want of accusers and Satan himself shall be the prosecutor, he, according to St. Augustin, will boldly assert his rights before the Judge, and say; Most just Judge, I call on thee to condemn and deliver into my hands these traitors, as they have ever been my subjects and obeyed my will. Thine they were because thou didst create them, thou didst make them after thy own image and likeness and didst redeem them with thy blood. But they have blotted out thy likeness and assumed mine, they have renounced obedience to thee and adopted me as their commander, they

have set at nought thy commandments and have followed mine. They have lived under my inspirations, they have imitated my works, they have walked in my paths and in all they have worn my livery. Behold they have been mine rather than thine, without gift, without promise, without my having been nailed to the cross for their salvation, they have obeyed my orders and not thine. If I commanded them to swear, to perjure themselves, to rob, to commit murder or adultery and to deny thy holy name, they obeyed me with joy and alacrity. If I enjoined them to sacrifice their property, their life and their soul itself for a point of honour the importance of which I exaggerated to them, or for a deceitful pleasure to which I seduced them, they risked all for me : but for thee their God, their Creator and their Redeemer, to whom they owed property, health and life itself, who proffered thy grace, promised thy glory and above all who suffered death upon the cross for them ; in return for all they refused to undergo the slightest trouble in the world. How often has it occurred to thee to stand at their doors wounded and poor and naked and to find that they cared more for fattening their dogs and horses, for covering their walls with silk and golden tapestry than for thee ? And if this be true, it is but just that the day of chastisement should come for all their injuries and affronts to thy sovereign Majesty.

25.—Having heard the charge the Judge will pronounce upon the wicked that awful sentence, “Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for Satan and his angels ;

Mat. xxv.

because, I was hungry and ye gave me not to eat ; thirsty, and ye gave me not to drink, &c.” And thus will the good go to life eternal and the wicked to everlasting fire. Who can describe the feelings of the wretches to whom these words are addressed ? Then will they call upon the mountains to fall upon them and the hills to cover them.

Luke xxiii.

Then will they blaspheme, deny and curse their God and the day of their birth and their unhappy lot.

Then absolutely will their day have an end, their glory finish and the book of their prosperity be shut: and everlasting tortures will seize for ever on their bodies; as St. John explains it in the Apocalypse, under the name of Babylon, in

Apoc. xviii. 9.

these words: "And the kings of the earth who have committed fornication and lived in delicacies with her shall weep and bewail themselves over her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning; standing afar off for fear of her torments, saying; Alas! alas! that great city Babylon, that mighty city; for in one hour is thy judgment come! And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man shall buy their merchandise any more; merchandise of gold, and silver and precious stones; and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple and silk and scarlet, and all manner of vessels of ivory and all manner of vessels of precious stones, and of brass, for in one hour are so great riches come to nought."

26.—My dear brethren, if all this has to happen, let us prepare in time, and take the advice of him who chose to be our mediator before being our judge. No one better knows our wants on that day than he who will be the judge. He himself teaches us in a few words all that is essential; when

Luke xxi. 34.

he says by St. Luke "Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be over-charged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life; and that day come upon you suddenly, for as a snare shall it come upon all that sit upon the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that are to come and to stand before the Son of man." Brethren, bearing this in mind, come and arouse yourselves from this deep sleep, before the dark night of death encompasses you, before that dreadful day shall arrive of which the prophet says: "Behold he cometh, and

Mal. iii. 1. and 2.

who shall stand to see him? And who shall be able to think of the day of his coming? Truly, he

only can await the day of Judgment, who shall have taken the Judge by the hand, and first entered into judgment with himself."

CHAPTER XIII.

MEDITATION FOR FRIDAY NIGHT, ON THE PAINS OF HELL.

1.—Having made the sign of the cross, with the preparation mentioned in the second chapter, take for the subject of thy meditation the pains of hell, in order by means of this and the last meditation to fortify the soul in the fear of God and detestation of sin.

2.—According to St. Bonaventure, the sufferings of the damned should be viewed as bodily pains, and they have been so described by the saints. For this reason, according to the same Saint, we should imagine the infernal regions situate in a dark and gloomy lake in the bowels of the earth, or as a bottomless pit of fire, or as a city buried in the profoundest obscurity enveloped in lurid flames, whence no sounds issue but the mingled cries and groans of the tormentors and the tormented with never ending wailing and gnashing of teeth.

3.—In this unfortunate place the chief pains suffered by the damned are the pains of the senses and the pain of loss. As regards the first, consider that every one of the senses will be afflicted with its own peculiar torments. For as the wicked have sinned against God with all their members and senses, and have availed themselves of all for the commission of sin, so will he ordain that all shall be there tormented and each shall suffer its peculiar punishment according to its deserts. There the lecherous and carnal eyes shall be tortured with the horrible sight of demons; the ears with confused yells and howlings ringing around them; the nose with the abominable stench of that filthy region; the taste with ravenous hunger and thirst; the feeling and all the members of the body with insufferable heat and cold; the imagination with the dread of

present suffering ; the memory with the recollection of past pleasures ; the understanding with the consciousness of happiness lost for ever and of miseries to come.

4.—There in fine will be found combined every conceivable misery and torment. Because, as St. Gregory observes, there the intensity of cold will be intolerable, the fire will be unquenchable, the worm never dying, the smell unbearable, darkness palpable, the blows of the tormentors, the sight of demons, the confusion of sins and universal despair will be there. Tell me now, if the very least of all these evils endured in this world for ever so short a time, would be so dreadful to bear, what must it be to suffer at one and the same time every one of them in every member and in every sense internal and external, and that not for the space of one night only, nor for a thousand, but for an eternity? What human words can describe or intellect of man can appreciate the full meaning of this?

5.—These however are not the worst of the pains there to be endured, there remains another greater beyond all comparison, called by divines the pain of loss, which means the loss for ever of the vision of God and of the companionship of his glory. And though this pain will be common to all the damned, it will fall with greater severity on those who enjoyed in life more opportunities of enjoying those blessings : for example on all Christians, who have had preached to them the tidings of the Gospel, then on all bad members of religious orders and priests, who as they had these blessings nearer within their grasp, will feel the greater anguish at the loss of them.

6.—These are the pains common to all the damned, but in addition to these there will be others specially inflicted on each individual, according to the particular character of his offences. There will be a special punishment for pride, one for envy, another for avarice, another for luxury, and so on. In all these will most clearly be shewn the wisdom and justice

of God, who amidst the infinite number of sins and sinners, Isaiah xxvii. will distinguish the crimes of each one, and measure as with scales the penalty for every transgression, as the wise man said, "The judgments of the Lord are weight and measure." Oh what a terrible thing for the wicked to find the Almighty cognizant of every point, and what a subject of delight to the good to see the marvellous accuracy of the proportions of punishment amidst such a multitude of faults! There will sorrow be weighed out exact against the pleasure indulged in, confusion will be proportioned to pride and presumption, nakedness to abundance and excess, hunger and thirst to past revelry and gluttony. In this manner God awarded the chastisement of the harlot mentioned in the Apocalypse, who was seated over the waters of the sea, with a chalice in her hand filled with poisonous pleasures. Against whom he fulminated that sentence from heaven, saying—"Punish her with torments and sufferings proportioned to her pride and sensuality."

7.—All these evils will last for eternity—this is the key to all and the seal affixed to all; for every finite thing is endurable, and nothing is infinite to which there is an end; but punishment without end, without abatement, without cessation or change, hopeless of termination either of itself, or from Him who inflicts it or him who endures it, is like an eternal banishment, an irrevocable interdict never to be taken off, enough to deprive of reason any one seriously considering it.

8.—Hence arises the raving hatred which the damned entertain against God, and their blasphemous renunciation of him. Because as all hope of his friendship is lost, and they know they can never be restored to his favour, that not an atom of their punishment will be remitted, and because they see in God their scourge, and him who from on high holds them bound prisoners in chains, they lash themselves into such fury against him and never cease by night or day to vomit forth their blasphemies.

9.—At the conclusion of the meditation, make an act of thanksgiving an oblation and petition as directed in the second chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE PAINS OF HELL, WHERE THE SUBJECT OF THE LAST MEDITATION IS CONSIDERED AT GREATER LENGTH.

§ 1.—*Shewing the advantages to be obtained in various ways by meditating on the pains of hell.*

1.—The contemplation of the pains of hell is extremely profitable to the soul. First to incite us to bear our sufferings and the bitterness of penance in the same way as the blessed St. Jerome was moved thereto, who tells us of himself that from the great fear he had conceived of the pains of hell, he condemned himself to such a severe course of penance as to take up his habitation in the desert.

2.—It is also profitable, according to Ricardus, to enable us to overcome the temptations of the enemy, when at the first suggestion of wicked thoughts, we set before the mind the horror of the punishment which awaits indulgence in them, and so quench the flame of concupiscence by thinking on the flames which will burn for ever. In conformity with this, it is written that one of the fathers of the desert being tempted by the enemy with wicked thoughts, thrust his hand into some burning coals, to see if he could endure their comparatively insignificant heat, and being unable to do so, turned upon himself, saying, “If I am unable to bear this slight heat for so short a time, how shall I be able to stand the fire of hell for all eternity?”

3.—The consideration of this subject serves also to awaken in the heart the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom Eccle. i. and xxv. and of the love of God, and the most powerful curb to restrain us from sin. But it serves above all to create a horror of sin, by shewing the wretched consequences

of it, to be everlasting death. What a subject then for wonder to find so many believers daring enough to sin against God. There are two things which give special occasion for our astonishment. The one, that after all the miracles wrought amongst men by our Saviour there should be found so many unbelievers, the other, that amongst believers there should be found so many bold offenders. It is certainly wonderful that when our Saviour, amongst other miracles had worked such a miracle as the raising of Lazarus from the tomb after he had been four days dead, that many of those who were witnesses of the fact refused to believe in him; and it is also wonderful that amongst men, who through his preachings

John ii. believe in eternal punishments and happiness, there should be found so many daring enough to sin against him. It is astounding to witness such incredulity after such miracles, and such lax morality after such belief.

4.—But as this misfortune arises rather from want of thought than from want of faith, it is profitable to reflect upon what faith teaches, that being impressed with the thought of the severity of the punishment, we may live in more dread of the sins for which the punishment will be inflicted.

§ 2.—*On the two kinds of pain suffered in hell.*

5.—Innumerable as are the pains of hell, they may be all divided into two classes—the pains of the feelings or senses and the pain of loss. The pains of feeling are those which torment the senses and the bodies of the damned, and the pain of loss, is that of losing for ever the sight and company of God. These two sorts of pain correspond to the two evils and misfortunes attached to sin, the one arising from the inordinate love of the creature, the other from the contempt of the Creator. To these two evils the two sorts of punishment correspond. The pains inflicted on the senses are in punishment of sensual pleasures, that the indulgence in them contrary to God's commands may receive the reward due to the

libidinous character of the sin; and the pain of the eternal loss of God, is inflicted as a punishment for the contempt of God, because inasmuch as man was the first to abandon God, it is but a just retribution that he should be eternally abandoned by God. And as the latter of these two kinds of sin, viz. the contempt for God, is incomparably more heinous than the former, so the pain of loss, its corresponding punishment, is heavier beyond comparison than those inflicted on the senses.

6.—The first of all the pains to be inflicted on the external senses is by fire, according to St. Augustin, of such intensity that our fire here below is but a painted flame compared with it. This fire will not only burn the body, but the soul also, and will torment both without consuming, so that the pains may endure for ever. This, says St. Augustin, will happen by a special miracle, because God who endows everything in nature with its special attributes will bestow on this fire the special power to torture without consuming that on which it feeds.

7.—Behold now what must be the feelings of those unhappy creatures stretched for ever on such a bed as this! And the better to comprehend them, think what thy feelings would be if thrown into a boiling cauldron or cast into a furnace of fire like that of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, the
Dan. iii. flames from which mounted upwards of forty cubits, and thou mayst thus form some idea of the realities there: for if this one fire on earth be, as we have said, but of painted flames what will be the reality of that? It appears to me I need proceed no further, if man would but dwell for a short while on this reflection and pause until he has fully realized its meaning.

8.—Added to this pain will be another of a totally opposite character, yet not less dreadful, a feeling of the intensest cold; truly a frightful refresher to those who are burning in that fire, they being plunged, according to holy Job, from the

Job xxiv. scorching flame into freezing waters, that no sort of torment may be wanting to punish every species of pleasure in which they delighted to indulge.

9.—And not only will their torments consist of cold and heat, but the very demons in the figures of ferocious wild beasts and frightful monsters will stalk before them; the sight of which will torture the adulterous and lascivious eyes of those who were wont to paint their faces with artificial colours to serve as beautiful snares and nets of Satan.

10.—This punishment will be much more terrible than anyone can suppose, for if it be a well known fact that some persons have lost their senses and even died from fright, with the sight, nay the bare imagination of horrible things, and at times the mere suspicion of their presence, has caused the hair to stand on end from fear, what must be the terror in that dark lake, filled with such frightful chimeras as will then rise before the eyes of the wicked? Particularly reflect on the horrible appearance of the devil himself as represented in such a fearful form by God himself in the Holy Scriptures; as when in the Book of Job he is thus described. “Who can

Job xli. discover the face of his garment? Or who can go into the midst of his mouth? Who can open the doors of his face? His teeth are terrible round about. His body is like molten shields, shut close up with scales pressing upon one another. One is joined to another, and not so much as any air can come between them; they stick one to another and they hold one another fast, and shall not be separated. His sneezing is like the shining of fire, and his eyes like the eyelids of the morning. Out of his mouth go forth lamps, like torches of lighted fire. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke like that of a pot heated and boiling. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame cometh forth out of his mouth.” How would the sight of such a horrible monster as here described, terrify us?

11.—To the torments inflicted on the eyes will be added another fearful punishment for the nose; the intolerable stench which will pervade those regions in chastisement for the scents and perfumes which the carnal children of the world delighted to indulge in, in this life, as God has threatened, speaking through the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah; “Because the daughters of Sion are haughty and have walked with stretched-out necks, and wanton glances of

Isaiah iii. 16. their eyes, and make a noise as they walked with their feet, and moved in a set pace, and boasted of their pomps and riches amongst the empty and the naked. The Lord will make bald the crown of the head of the daughters of Sion with all their other profane ornaments, and instead of a sweet smell there shall be stench, and instead of a girdle a rope, and instead of curled hair baldness, and instead of a stomacher haircloth.” Behold the punishment awaiting the scents and fripperies of the children of the world.

12.—The better to appreciate the extent of this punishment, pause and reflect on that horrible torture invented by a cruel tyrant as a mode of treating criminals, he commanded the executioner to extend the living man upon a dead carcass, and bound tightly together the living and the dead leaving them thus united until the dead man killed the living one with the stench and the worms crawling out of him. If this torment appears to thee so horrible, tell me what that will be steaming from the stench of all the bodies of the damned and from that abominable dwelling of the wicked? There may they cry out to each of these wretched ones in the words of Isaiah: “Thy

Isaiah. pride hath gone down into hell, and there thy dead body hath fallen; the moth shall spread itself beneath thee, and thy covering over thee shall be worms.”

13.—If such be the punishment for the nose, what will that be for the ears, through which greater sins are committed? These shall be tormented with never-ceasing cries, screams, groans and blasphemies. For as in the heavens no sound will

be heard but eternal hallelujahs and divine praises, so on the other hand in this den of tormentors, nothing but blasphemies and curses, the discordant sound of an infinite number of harsh voices singing to the clang of the hammers and blows of the executioners; and such will be the confusion and noisy discord and such the shrieks from that miserable prison-house that the sounds when Troy was sacked and Rome reduced to ashes were nothing in comparison.

14.—The better to appreciate this punishment, imagine thyself traversing a deep valley amidst an infinite crowd of wounded and sick prisoners all screaming and crying out, each after his own manner, men and women children and old people; tell me what thou wouldst think of this horrible din and confusion? What then must be the dreadful noise of all the crowd of the damned ever employed in shrieking out their blasphemies against God and his saints? What galley filled with renegades and convicts is peopled like hell? These are their daily matins. This is the dismal chapel of the prince of darkness. These are his lauds and these his singers, these will be the brothers and companions of all murmurers and cursers and of those who hearkened to the lies of the enemy.

15.—The tongue and dainty palate will not escape their punishment, since we read in the Gospel of the thirst suffered by the rich glutton amongst the flames, and how he cried out to the holy patriarch begging for a single drop of water to cool his burning tongue.

§ 3.—*On the torments of the internal powers of the soul.*

16.—Dreadful as are these pains inflicted upon the body, more dreadful still will be those inflicted on the internal powers of the soul, on which the punishment will fall much heavier inasmuch as they were more guilty, in neglecting to put a bridle upon sin. First the imagination will be tormented with such dreadful apprehensions of all these sufferings as to be utterly incapable of dwelling upon any other subject. If

when suffering from some acute pain we are unable to withdraw our thoughts from it, however much we may struggle to do so, because the mind is so occupied with the pain that it has no room for any thought beyond, how much worse will it befall it there, where the pain is incomparably more intolerable? Thus will the imagination keep alive suffering, and suffering the imagination, so that in every way the pains of the damned may be aggravated. These subjects will supply continual meditations for those, who never during this life wished to reflect on these pains, in order that those who would not think here and so place a bridle on their lives, may there suffer the chastisement due to their crimes.

17.—The memory also on her part will be tormented with the recollection of former joys and past pleasures for the gratification of which she has now to suffer such tortures. There will men clearly see the cost of their wretched gluttony, and find the savoury mouthfuls once so sweet were yet seasoned with pepper. A wise man remarked that under all sorts of adversity one of the severest trials was after having enjoyed prosperity to come afterwards to want. When then the rich and powerful in this world, shall look back and call to mind their former prosperity and the abundance in which they lived, and see that abundance followed by the want of everything, even of a single drop of water, and that their feasts have been converted into labours, their luxuries into miseries, their perfumes into stench, their music into groans, what pain so grievous could afflict their memory?

18.—But that pain will be still greater, when they compare the duration of past pleasures with present sorrows, and find the one over in an instant, the other lasting for ever. How overwhelming will be their sorrow, how deep their groans, when after casting up the account they shall find this life was but a shadow of a dream; and that for the pleasures of a moment they will have to suffer everlasting torments?

19.—The memory will suffer the pains occasioned by the recollection of past happiness, but the understanding will suffer more from the contemplation of the glory she has lost. Hence is born remorse the worm of conscience, with which the sacred Scriptures so often threaten us, which day and night shall bite and gnaw and feed upon the bowels of the damned. The worm is born in wood and is always gnawing the wood out of which it sprung; so this worm born of sin is always biting the sin which engendered it.

20.—This worm means rage and rabid remorse which seize on the wicked, when they reflect upon what they have lost, the cause of their loss, and the opportunity they had not to lose it. This opportunity is ever present to their minds, and always, but to no purpose, devouring their innermost soul, making them ever cry out: Oh, woe is me, that once had the opportunity of gaining all that is good, and would not avail myself thereof! There was a time when this good was offered me, when I was prayed to accept it, but to no purpose, I desired it not. One confession, once pronouncing my sins with my tongue in contrition and I should have obtained pardon; if I only asked of God for a remedy, he offered to bestow it. In return for one cup of cold water he would have given me everlasting life. Now I shall for ever fast and pray and do penance, but to no purpose. Oh, for the time gone by, never to return! What did I receive for risking so much? Though they had given me all the kingdoms and delights of the world to enjoy for as many years as there are grains of sand on the sea shore all would be as nothing set against the pains I here suffer. But they gave me nothing of the sort, only the small shadow of a transitory pleasure, and have I for this to undergo eternal torments? Oh accursed pleasure, accursed exchange! And accursed be the hour and the moment when I was so blind! Oh blind, and miserable and a thousand times unfortunate thus to have deceived myself! Cursed be he that deceived me, and cursed he who withheld chastisement from me. Cursed

be the father who pampered me and cursed the mother who gave me suck, and the bread that I ate and cursed too all the life I lived. Cursed be the hour of my birth and all that contributed to give me being. Thrice happy those who never existed, who were never born, happy the womb that never conceived and the breasts that never gave suck.

21.—In this way will these unfortunates vent their maledictions on all created things and especially on those which have been the cause of their perdition. We read in the lives of the fathers of a holy man who beheld in a vision a deep well full of flames and in the midst of them walked a father and his son bound fast together and cursing each other with the most ferocious fury. The father cried out, "Cursed child, to make thee rich I was a usurer and for that am I condemned;" and the son said, "Cursed be thou, my father, for thinking to do me good, thou hast been my ruin, for thou bequeatest to me an inheritance of ill-gotten goods, through means of which I am condemned!"

22.—Beyond all these however, what will be the torments and the pains of the will? She will ever be possessed with a raging envy of the glory of God and his elect, which will ever gnaw her interior like the worm we have before spoken of. Speaking of this pain, the Psalmist says; "The sinner shall

Psalm iii.

see and be angry; he shall gnash with his teeth and pine away; and the desire of the wicked shall perish." They shall moreover feel a great horror and hatred of God for detaining and punishing them there, and as a savage dog wounded with a spear turns with fury to bite it, so would they, if it were possible, tear to pieces the Almighty who has thrust the spear into them and who from on high strikes them with the sword of his justice. The greatest obstinacy in their sins will also possess them; they will grieve not because they *are* wicked, nor because they *were* wicked, nay they would wish rather to have been worse, and if they have any regret for having led a life of wickedness, it is not from any love of

God, but from their self-love and because they might have avoided those torments if they had chosen to live otherwise. Moreover they will be filled with eternal despair, because they think so badly of God and his mercy that they have no hope of ever receiving pardon and are certain that their pains will endure for ever without any mitigation; and this is the cause of their blasphemies, and of their lewdness of tongue against God, for as they have now nothing to hope from him, so will they strive to their utmost to avenge themselves with their raving tongues.

§ 4.—*On the pain of loss.*

23.—Is it possible to believe that beyond all these pains, there is something still worse to suffer? Yes, it is certain that all these pains united are as nothing compared with that of which we are about to speak. Look thou well to that, since we may call all the horrible torments above described as absolutely nothing compared to it. Because all the pains hitherto mentioned for the most part affect the feelings and the senses: but the pain of loss, of which we now speak is beyond comparison greater. This is clearly the case and for the following reason; because this pain is a spoliation of something good once possessed or hoped to be possessed; and the greater the good, the greater the pain felt for its loss; this is evident in the loss of temporal goods where the more valuable the property the greater is the suffering for the loss of it. Since then God is infinite goodness itself and the greatest of all good, it is certain the loss of him must be an infinite evil and the greatest of all evils.

24.—In addition to this, God being the centre of the reasoning powers of the soul and the place wherein dwells her complete repose, it follows that the separation of this soul from God, is the most painful of all separations. "Therefore," says St. Chrysostom, "all the fires of hell combined could not inflict such pain upon the soul as this separation from God himself."

25.—Words do not suffice to describe the extent of this suffering; the separations which are continually happening in war through captivity where infants are snatched from their mothers' breasts are nothing compared to this eternal bereavement and separation. To appreciate it better, stop and consider a most horrible kind of death which tyrants have from time to time inflicted on some of the martyrs. They caused the branches of large trees to be forcibly bent to the ground, and bound by the feet a holy martyr to the ends of the boughs. Suddenly they ordered the branches to be loosed that flying back again to their natural positions the body of the martyr might be hurled on high and torn to pieces in the air, each bough carrying away suspended from it a portion of the body. If this rending asunder of the parts of the body was so dreadful a torture, what must be the rending asunder from God, who is not a part but the whole essence of our soul? And this act of rending asunder will not endure for only the short space of time the branches required to fly to their places, but as long as God shall be God.

§ 5.—*On the particular pains of the damned.*

26.—There are other punishments in addition to those already mentioned, which are general and common to all the damned, viz:—particular punishments assigned and ordained for each individual according to the quality of his offences, as signified by the Prophet Isaiah, when he said “In measure against measure, when it shall be cast off thou shalt judge it,

Isaiah xxvii. 8. he hath meditated with his severe spirit in the day of heat.” ‘The day of heat’ means the day of the divine wrath. ‘The severe spirit’ signifies the terrible nature of the sentence, which will punish temporal crimes with eternal pains, ‘the measure against measure’ means the quantity and proportion of the punishment according to the quality of the crime: Because, there will be displayed the beautiful consistency of divine justice rendering to every one

according to his merits and according to his offences. Hence a learned doctor says that there the avaricious will be reduced to miserable want. The lazy will be pricked with burning goads. The glutton will be tormented with insatiable hunger and thirst. The carnal and lewd will be assailed by stinking flames of brimstone. The envious will howl with griping pains like rabid dogs. The proud and presumptuous will be filled with eternal confusion; and so of the rest. Then, Oh worshippers of this world, lovers of honour, ye who gather together riches, inventors of new fashions, new dishes, and new pleasures! Then Oh sorrowful and miserable City of Babylon who shall now take pity on thee, and again weep over thee with the compassionate tears of our Saviour? saying,

Luke xix.

“If thou too hadst known this thy day!”

Oh if only thou hadst known how dear these mouthfuls were to cost thee, and what severe executioners would prove these idols which thou adorest. Those who eat fruit before it is ripe will have their teeth edged, and if worldlings choose to indulge in ease before its time and to live on earth as a paradise instead of as a place of exile, they will some day find their teeth set on edge, according to that threat of God through his prophet, when he says, “Let every man who

Jeremiah.

eateth sour grapes before they ripen know that they will taste bitter,” he eats them before they are ripe who desires to forestall and anticipate in this life the pleasures of the next, and his mouth shall be filled with bitterness when he shall receive his chastisement from God for desiring before the time, to enjoy pleasures and repose.

§ 6.—*On the eternity of the pains of hell.*

27.—Terrible as are all these pains united, what will they be if in addition they are to last for a never-ending eternity? After ten thousand years and a hundred thousand more, add as many thousands of millions as there are stars in the heavens and grains of sand upon the sea shore and still when

this number is completed, their sufferings will go on commencing as afresh, and so continue for ever revolving round the eternal wheel of torture. "For Tophet is prepared from yesterday," says Isaiah, "prepared by the king deep and

Isaiah xxx. 33.

wide. The nourishment thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord as a torrent of brimstone kindleth it." This valley of Tophet is the abyss of hell prepared from yesterday; viz. from the beginning of the world, for the punishment of the wicked. Its nourishment is the fire which burns but does not consume, that which supplies the fire cannot possibly be finished or wasted by time. And why this fire can never die is, that it is fed by devils whose eternal charge is to blow and kindle it, and being immortal they can never weary of supplying it. But should they fail, the breath of the eternal God will never fail to fan the flames. 'Twere well for men to understand the meaning of this duration, for doubtless it would profit them much as a curb during life. On this account it will not be amiss to give a few examples from parallel cases the better to understand some little of this.

28.—Pause then a moment, and consider the mode of torture adopted in some places against malefactors who are burnt alive; and who according to the heinousness of their crimes are subjected to various degrees of heat, as the less the fire, the longer will be the duration of their tortures. But will this ingenious species of cruelty be able to lengthen the torments much? Scarcely the length of a day. Tell me then, I pray thee, if this style of torment so terrific and inhuman can at most even with a slow fire be protracted for the space of but one single day, what must that be which with such a fire will endure for an eternity? Where is the mathematician who can calculate the infinite excess of the one over the other? If then man to escape such sufferings would undergo every danger and privation, how much more are we called upon to use every effort to escape these torments?

29.—Consider further that terrible species of torture invented by that most cruel tyrant Phalaris, of whom it is written, that he ordered a prisoner to be enclosed in the belly of a brazen bull and a fire afterwards to be lighted under it, so that the miserable wretch by the heat of the metal was gradually roasting, unable to escape and unable to receive assistance, until he was burnt to death amidst his shrieks and contortions. At the bare relation of this, does not the flesh creep upon our bones at the thought of it? Tell me then now Oh Christian soul, what is all this but an empty sound compared with that of which we are speaking? If the thought of this alone makes us shudder, what will it be not to think on, but to suffer this torment? Truly eternal torments are so dreadful, that were only one of all the children of Adam destined to endure them, that would suffice to make every other tremble. Because only one of Christ's disciples had to betray him, and when our Lord said; "One of you is about
 Mat. xxvi. to betray me," all began to fear and be filled with sorrow, so grievous was the charge; how is it then that we do not tremble knowing so well that the number of fools is infinite, and that narrow is the way to life? And that hell has opened its arms to receive the multitudes that
 Ecclesi. i. rush into it? If we do not believe this,
 Matt. vii. where is our faith? If we believe it and
 Isai. v. acknowledge it, where our judgment and reason? And if we have judgment and reason how is it we do not fill the streets with cries and lamentations? How is it we do not fly to the deserts like many of the saints and pass our lives amongst wild beasts to escape these torments? How can we sleep at night? How is it our brain is not turned by the thought of such extreme dangers, since less misfortunes have sufficed not only to overturn the reason but even to deprive men of their lives?

30.—It is then one of the heaviest punishments of the damned to know that God and his chastisements ever co-exist,

therefore there is no consolation for them as their punishment can know no end. If these unfortunate wretches could only believe that after the lapse of a hundred thousand millions of years their sufferings would end, this alone would be of the greatest comfort, for however late still an end would come. But this cannot be, for according to St. Gregory, death befalls the wicked but they never die, and their end closes upon them but their career never ends, for there death lives eternally and the end is for ever beginning. Therefore said the prophet;

Psalm lxxxi.

“Like sheep they are folded in hell and they shall graze upon death.” The grass that is grazed is not plucked up, because it remains alive at the root which is the seat of its life and causes it again to spring up that it may be pastured again. Therefore the herbage of the fields is everlasting, it is ever grazed and always revives. Thus shall death be for ever the pasturage of the damned; and as death cannot die it will for ever supply the pasture, never weary of its duty nor fail to supply a mouthful, because it will have always food to supply, as they will for ever have sufferings to endure.

CHAPTER XV.

MEDITATION FOR SATURDAY NIGHT, ON THE HAPPINESS OF ETERNAL GLORY.

1.—Having made the sign of the cross, with the preparation mentioned in the second chapter take as the subject for thy meditation, the happiness of eternal glory. The consideration of this is so advantageous to the soul, that assisted by the light of a lively faith it should suffice to sweeten all the toils and bitterness that are endured through life in order to obtain it. When we reflect how the love of property sweetens the labours of those who work, and how the love of her offspring lulls the pains of woman in childbirth; what should be the effect of the love of this supreme good in comparison with which every other good is as nothing? And if the seven years that the Patriarch Jacob served appeared so short to

him, through the great love he entertained towards Rachel, what would the love of that infinite beauty, and of that eternal espousal do, if only contemplated with the eyes of a lively faith?

2.—To enable us better to understand this we will consider, amongst others, five principal ingredients to be found in it; viz. the pre-eminent excellency of heaven, the delightful companionship to be found there, the sight of God himself, the body clothed with glory, and lastly the plenitude of all goodness which will be there found.

3.—Consider then, first the pre-eminent excellency of the place, and its wonderful immensity. For when we read in the works of the most celebrated writers that every one of the stars is larger than the whole earth, and further that some are so immense as to be ninety times its size; and then lift up our eyes to heaven and there behold the infinite number of the stars and such extensive openings between them capable of containing so many more, does it not strike the beholder with awe? Does he not stand astounded and beside himself when pondering on the immensity of this space, and much more still on the immensity of the Sovereign Master who created all out of nothing?

4.—Then, words cannot portray the beauty of all; for if in this vale of tears and place of banishment, God has created objects of such marvellous beauty, what must he not have created there in the seat of his glory, the throne of his greatness, the palace of his majesty, the dwelling-place of his elect and the paradise of all delights?

5.—After the surpassing grandeur of the place, consider
 Daniel vii. next the nobility of its occupants, whose
 Apoc. v. 7. number, sanctity, riches and beauty surpass
 the powers of the imagination. St. John informs us that the number of the elect is so great that no man can number them. St. Dyonisius tells us, that the number of the angels exceeds beyond all comparison the number of all created things on

earth. St. Thomas, in accordance with that, adds that as the greatness of the heavens infinitely exceeds the size of the earth, so the multitude of those glorious spirits surpasses that of all material things in this world in the same magnificent proportion. Then what can be more wonderful than this? Surely this is enough, if rightly considered, to fill every heart with astonishment. And if even the least of the angels be more beautiful than all this visible world, what must it be to behold such a number and of such beauty, and to witness the perfections and engagements of each in that sovereign city? There the Angels discourse, the Archangels minister, the Principalities triumph, the Powers rejoice, the Dominations are enthroned, the Virtues shine, the Thrones blaze, the Cherubim glitter, the Seraphim burn and all unite in singing praises to

Job xxx.

God. If then the company and society of the good be so delightful, what will it be there to associate with so many of the good, to talk to the apostles, to converse with the prophets, to hold communion with the martyrs and with all the elect?

6.—And if so great be the glory of enjoying the fellowship of the good, what will it be to enjoy the company and presence of Him whom the stars of the morning praise, at whose beauty the sun and moon are filled with wonder, before whom the angels appear on bended knees, and of whose presence man enjoys the glory? What will it be to see that universal Good in which is all that is good, and that greater world in which are all worlds, and that which being one is all things, and itself the most simple embraces the perfections of all? If only to see and hear King Solomon, was so rich a treat as to make the Queen of Saba exclaim, “Happy are

III Kings, x.

those who serve before thee, and rejoice in thy wisdom.” What will it be to see that true Solomon, that eternal wisdom, that infinite greatness, that inestimable beauty, that inexhaustible goodness, and to rejoice in it for ever? This is the essence of the glory of the saints, the ultimate end and centre of our desires.

7.—Consider after this the glory of the body, every atom of which will be clothed in glory, for there every member and every sense will enjoy its own particular glory and the object of its special delight. Every body there will rejoice in being endowed with these four special gifts, impalpability, velocity, impassibility and brightness which will radiate from each bright as the sun in the kingdom of the Father. If one

Matt. xxiv.

sun in the firmament suffices to diffuse light

Wisdom iii.

and joy throughout the whole world, what will be the effect of so many suns all shedding their radiant beams around ?

8.—To sum up, lastly in this glory will be united all that is good, and there will be an absence of all that is evil. There will be health without sickness, liberty without slavery, beauty without spot, immortality without corruption, abundance without want, rest without disturbance, security without fear, knowledge without error, plenty without satiety, joy without sorrow, and honour without question. "There," says St. Augustin, "will be found true glory, where none will be praised through mistake or flattery ! There will be true honour, denied to none who deserve it, and given to none who deserve it not. There will be true peace, where man will be neither distracted himself nor molested by others. The reward of virtue will be God who gave it and promised himself as its reward, being the greatest and best of all things. He will be the end of our desires, himself without end will be loved without satiety and for ever praised with unwearied joy. There spacious beautiful splendid and secure, will be the residence, the society will be charming and delightful, and time itself undivided will know no distinction between morning and evening but merely be prolonged into an eternity. There will perpetual summer always reign fanned by the refreshing breath of the Holy Spirit. There all will ever rejoice and sing the praises of the Supreme Giver of all by whose bounty they live and reign in His glory. Oh heavenly

city, eternal and secure resting-place, land of delights, where murmurers are not found, where neighbours are at peace and man is without wants! Oh that this strife below were ended! Oh that the days of my banishment here below were finished! Oh why is the time of my pilgrimage lengthened! When will that day come! When will it come and when shall I appear before the face of my God?"

Psalm xli.

9.—At the conclusion of the meditation make an act of thanksgiving, an oblation and petition as directed in the second chapter.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE GLORY OF PARADISE, BEING AN EXTENSION OF THE LAST MEDITATION.

§ 1.—*Shewing how meditation upon the happiness of eternal glory will encourage us to undergo every labour in order to obtain it.*

1.—One of the chief objects to which our eyes should be ever directed in this vale of tears, is the happiness of eternal glory, for this consideration of itself would suffice to encourage us to undergo every suffering in order to obtain it. When God promised the Land of Promise to the Patriarch Abraham, he commanded him to walk over it and around it, saying,

Gen. xix.

“Arise and pace over this land both in its breadth and its length, and examine it on all sides, because I am about to bestow it upon thee.” Arise then now my soul and mount on high, casting aside all earthly cares and business, and on the wings of the spirit fly to that noble land of promise and examine attentively the length of its eternity, the breadth of its felicity and the greatness of its riches with all its other perfections.

2.—It is written of the Queen of Saba that hearing

III Kings, i.

of the fame of Solomon, she came to the City of Jerusalem to behold the grandeur and wonderful things spoken of that king. And since the fame of that

heavenly Jerusalem and of that great king who rules over it is not less, ascend thou now in spirit to that noble city to contemplate the wisdom of that sovereign king, and the beauty of that temple, and the service of that table, and the rank of those who wait at it, the liveries of the servants and all the policy and glory of that noble city. Because if thou but knowest how to admire all these things, perhaps thy spirit will be raised above itself, and thou wilt know that not the least particle of all this glory has been denied to thee. But to attain this, the special light of God is necessary, as the apostle signifies when he says, "I bow my knees unto the

Ephes. iii.

God of Glory and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that he will give you the spirit of wisdom, and enlighten the eyes of your hearts that ye may know how great is the hope of your calling and the richness of that inheritance and glory which he has prepared for the saints."

3.—And although in this glory there are many things to contemplate, thou mayst now more particularly consider these five principal ones, on which we have before touched, namely, the pre-eminent excellency of the place, the delightful companionship to be found there, the vision of God, the glory of the body, and the eternal duration of all these blessings.

§ 2.—*On the beauty and excellence of the seat of Glory.*

4.—Consider first the beauty of the place, thus described in figure by St. John in the Apocalypse, in these words, "There
Apoc. xxi. and xxii. came one of the seven angels and spoke with me saying; come and I will shew thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he took me up in spirit to a great and high mountain; and he shewed me the holy City of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and the light thereof was like to a precious stone. And it had a wall great and high, having twelve gates, and in the gates twelve Angels, and names written thereon. And the foundations of the wall of the City were adorned with all manner of

precious stones, and the twelve gates thereof are twelve precious stones, one to each; and the square of the City was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof and the Lamb. And the City hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. And moreover the angel shewed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the Throne of God and of the Lamb: and in the midst of the square thereof, and on both sides of the river, was the Tree of Life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no curse any more, but the Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

5.—See here, brother, the beauty of this City painted in black and white, not that thou art to think that all these things are substantially there, according to the letter, but thou art to understand that other excellent and spiritual things are there, figured by this description.

6.—The scite of this City is in the highest heavens, and its length and breadth are incalculable. For if each star be as great as we have said, how immense must be that heaven of heavens which embraces them all? There is nothing so great in this world as to afford a basis for comparison. For, as one of the saints remarks, from Cadiz to the extreme points of the Indies, in fair weather, a ship will make the passage in a few days, but in the region of the heavens the journey to the smallest star which appears but a speck would last for many years.

7.—Then as to its buildings, no tongue can describe them. For if this outward world is so beautiful to the eye of man, how will that appear which is reserved for the eyes of the

immortal? And if we find the hand of man able to perfect such works of beauty as to claim the admiration of all who look upon them, what must those be, wrought by the hand of God in his royal house and holy palace, that seat of repose prepared for the glory of his elect? "How lovely are thy
Psalm lxxxiii. tabernacles Oh Lord of Hosts! My soul
 longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord."

8.—The grandeur of a city depends chiefly upon the character of its inhabitants, we look for rank, for population and for harmony amongst its citizens. On these points who is able to describe the excellency of this City? All the dwellers therein are gentle, there are none of mean quality for they are all the children of God. Such concord reigns, that there is but one heart and soul amongst them, and such universal peace that the City bears the name of Jerusalem, that is to say, the vision of peace. And wouldst thou know the extent of the population of this City, St. John informs us in the Apocalypse, where he says, he "Apoc. vii. 9. Saw in spirit so great a multitude of the blessed, that no man could count them, of all nations and people and tongues, who stood before the Throne of God and of the Lamb, clothed in white garments and bearing triumphal palms in their hands singing canticles of praise to God." This accords with what is mentioned by the Prophet Daniel relative to this sacred band,
Daniel vii. 10. where he says "Thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him."

9.—And do not think because the numbers are so great, they are therefore unruly, for numbers are not the cause of confusion, but rather of greater order and harmony. For he who with such marvellous skill has regulated the movements of the heavens and the courses of the stars, giving to each its name, has marshall'd that innumerable army of the blessed with such wondrous dexterity, that each one has his appointed place and share of glory proportioned to his deserts. Thus is

there a place for virgins, another for confessors, another for the holy martyrs, one for the patriarchs and prophets, another for the apostles and evangelists, and so on for all the rest. And after the same manner that mankind is divided and stationed, are the angels separated into three hierarchies, subdivided into nine choirs, raised above all of whom is the Throne of the most serene Queen of Angels forming a choir herself as no one is equal or like unto her. And lastly there, over all presides the most holy humanity of Christ seated on high at the right hand of the majesty of God.

10.—Pass then, Oh christian soul through these choirs, traverse these squares and streets, admire the order that reigns amongst the inhabitants, the beauty of this City and the noble rank of the dwellers therein. Salute each by name and crave the assistance of his prayers. Salute also that delightful country, and like a pilgrim about to visit it, though on some distant day, covet it with the eyes of thy heart saying ; hail sweet home, land of promise, port of refuge, asylum of safety, house of happiness, everlasting kingdom, paradise of pleasure, garden of never fading flowers, field teeming with every good, crown of the just and object of all our wishes ! Hail, our mother, our hope for whom we sigh, for whom we groan and for whom we strive, since none can receive their crown in thee who have not strived faithfully for thee.

§ 3.—*On the second joy of the soul, derived from the companionship of the Saints.*

11.—Who after these joys, can express the excess of delights in which he will revel in the company of this happy society ? For there in its perfection is the bond of charity making all things in common. That prayer of our Saviour, where he says, "Father I pray thee that they may be one
John xvii. thing in thee with me for love, as we also are one," is there granted in all its perfection ; for there are we more closely united together, than are the members of

the same body, for all participate in one spirit which gives to all one being and one happy life. But tell me, how is it that the members of the body have such affinity and such love for each other? Because they are all parts of the same form, that is of the same soul, which gives to all, one being and one life. If then the spirit of man possesses the virtue of uniting so closely the different members in their different natural duties, how much more potent is the spirit of God, by means of which, as the common soul of all, the elect draw the breath of life, to create a closer and more perfect union amongst them, as the object is higher, the virtue more excellent and the being given more noble?

12.—Tell me then now, if unity and love have the power of making all things in common, both for good and for evil, as we see in the members of the same body and in the love of mothers for their offspring who rejoice in their welfare as in their own, what will be the delight of each of the elect in the glory of all the rest, since each will love all others as he loves himself? For, according to St Gregory, the inheritance of all in heaven belongs to each, and that of each belongs to all; because each derives from the joys of the others as much delight as if he possessed them all himself. What then is the consequence, except that as the number of the blessed is infinite so the joys of each will be infinite? Except, that as each will enjoy the blessings of all the rest, what he claimed not in his own right, he will possess in right of the rest? They are in a spiritual sense the seven sons of Job, amongst
 Job i. whom there was such close love and fellowship, that each in turn one day every week entertained all the others, hence each enjoyed not only his own, but equally that of all the others as his own: thus was that of each common to all, and that of all to each. Love and brotherhood wrought this in this holy fraternity. How much larger is the brotherhood of the elect? How much greater the number of the
 Luke xix. brethren? How much greater the wealth

and riches to be enjoyed? According to this, what sort of banquet will be there prepared for us by the Seraphim the most exalted of all the Spirits of God and the closest allied to him, when they disclose to our eyes the magnificence of their state, the brightness of their contemplations and the burning fervour of their love? What sort of banquet the Cherubim amongst whom are locked up the treasures of the wisdom of God? What the Thrones and Dominations and all the other orders of happy spirits? What will it be to revel in the sight of the glorious army of martyrs, clad in white garments with palms in their hands and bearing the glorious insignia of their triumphs? What will it be to behold assembled together those eleven thousand virgins and those ten thousand martyrs followers of the glory and the cross of Christ with the innumerable multitude of others? What a pleasure will it not be to see that glorious deacon bearing in his hands his gridiron, shewing brighter than the flames in which he was burnt when he defied the power of tyrants, and wearied his executioners with his indomitable patience? What to see that most beautiful virgin St. Catherine crowned with roses and lilies, after conquering the wheel and its spikes with the arms of faith and hope? What to see those seven noble youths with their holy dauntless mother despising death and tortures for the love of

Mac. viii.

the law of God? What collar of gold and precious stones so beautiful as the neck of the glorious Baptist who preferred to lose his head rather than connive at the

Mat. ii. 14.

adulterous king? What robe of purple so magnificent as the body of St. Bartholomew flayed for the sake of Christ? What will the body of St. Stephen bruised with

Acts viii.

stones appear but a splendid dress spangled with rubies and emeralds? And you, glorious princes of the Christian Church, how will ye shine, one with a sword the other with the glorious standard of Christ, with which ye were crowned? What will it be to share in all these glories as if they were our own? Oh glorious feast! Oh royal

banquet! Oh table worthy of God and of his elect! Away then wqrldlings to your filthy carnal banquets to burst yourselves with your gluttony and excesses. A banquet like this where such delicacies are served up is fit for God himself.

13.—Mount up still further on high above all the choirs of angels and there thou wilt find another phase of glory peculiar in itself which marvellously fills all that royal court with joy and inebriates with its wondrous sweetness the City of God. Lift up thy eyes, and behold the Queen of Mercy clad in the brightness of beauty, at whose glory angels stand amazed and men are filled with pride. She is the Queen of

Apoc. xii.

Heaven, crowned with stars, clothed with the beams of the sun, with the moon beneath her feet, the "blessed amongst women." See the delight of beholding face to face this our Queen and Mother, not on bended knees hanging over the crib, not weighed down with fear and trembling

Luke iii.

at the prophecies of holy Simeon, not in tears searching everywhere for her lost child, but in contented peace and security seated on the right hand of her Son without fear of ever again losing that treasure. No longer will it be necessary in the dead silence of the night to fly with the child into

Matt. ii. John xix.

the Land of Egypt to avoid the schemes of Herod. No more will she see herself at the foot of the cross with the drops of blood trickling down upon her head and carrying away on her veil a perpetual memorial of her sorrow. No more will she bear the grief of that sorrowful exchange when the disciple was given to her for a guardian and the servant for a master. Never again will come from her lips those words of sorrow said to have been uttered by her amidst streams of tears under that bloody tree. "Would to God I

II Kings, xviii.

might die for thee, Absalom my son, my son Absalom!" All this has ended now, and she who of all pure creatures in this world bore the most afflictions will behold herself exalted above all created beings, rejoicing for ever in

the possession of infinite goodness and exclaiming: "I have
 Cant. iv. found him whom my soul loveth; I have
 held him and will never let him go."

14.—And if this be such excessive delight, what will it be to behold the most sacred humanity of Christ, and the glory and beauty of that body which was so disfigured upon the cross? It will be truly a matter of sweet pleasure to men, says St. Bernard, to see the Creator of men a man. Every relative considers himself specially honoured if one of his blood be made a Cardinal or Pope: how much higher the honour to see our Lord who is of our own flesh and blood, seated on the right hand of the Father as King of heaven and of earth? How proud will men be amongst the angels when they see the Lord of all and the Creator of all, is not an angel but a man? If men esteem the honour done to their head as done to them in consequence of their intimate union with it, how great will be their pride there when the union between the head and members is so close? What else will it be, but that all will rejoice in the glory of their Lord as their own? This joy will be so great that no words suffice sufficiently to paint it. Who then amongst us will be so happy as to enjoy this sovereign good!

Cant. viii. 1. "Who will give thee to me for my brother, sucking the breasts of my mother, that I may find thee without and kiss thee with the lips of devotion and embrace thee with the arms of love!" Oh my most sweet Lord, when shall that day be? When shall I see thee face to face? When shall I be filled with thy beauty? When shall I see that face on which the angels love to gaze?

§ 4.—*On the third joy of the soul, from the clear vision of God.*

15.—How great then beyond all will be the delight of the soul to see clearly the face of the Almighty, in the vision of which consists the essential glory of the saints? All those things of which we have hitherto spoken are truly great attributes of glory, but they sink into insignificance when com-

pared to this. It is said of Issachar that "He saw rest that
Gen. xlix. 15. it was good; and the land that it was excellent; and he bowed his shoulder to carry, and became a servant under tribute." The rest and the glory of the saints is good, but the land which gives this rest is most excellent in a pre-eminent degree, for it is the countenance and beauty of God from the vision of which proceed both their rest and their glory. This is the only thing that suffices to give complete repose to our souls, because though the sweetness and loveliness of creatures can give delight to the human heart, they cannot satisfy it. Since then all these good things afford so much delight, what must be the delight from the possession of that Infinite Good, the sum and perfection of every other good? And if the sight of creatures only be so ravishing, what will it be to see that face, that light, and beauty in which every beauty shines? What to see that divine essence so admirable, so simple, so communicable, and in it, to behold in one view the mystery of the most Blessed Trinity, the glory of the Father, the wisdom of the Son and goodness and love of the Holy Ghost?

16.—There shall we see God, and God will see us, and we shall see all things in God. St. Fulgentius says, "As he who holds a looking-glass before him, sees the glass and himself in the glass, and sees everything else that is before the glass, so when we have that unspotted mirror of the Divine Majesty before us, we shall see him, and we shall see ourselves in him, and moreover everything out of him, according to the greater or less knowledge which we had of him." There will the appetite of the understanding be satisfied and will crave to know no more since it will be filled with the fulness of all the knowledge it can contain. There will the will be filled with content in the love of that universal good in which is all that is good and beyond which there is nothing worthy of enjoyment. There will our love be set at rest and the heart filled to overflowing with exquisite pleasure, leaving it

nothing further to long for. There will receive their full reward those three virtues with which God here desires to be honoured, viz. faith, hope and charity; to faith will be granted the vision of God, to hope the possession, and to imperfect charity, charity in all perfection. There will they see, love, delight, and praise, there will they be filled without satiety, hungry without want. There will be ever sung that canticle as anew which St. John heard sung in the Apocalypse, he

Apoc. xiv.

calls it as it were anew for though always the same, as being a common hymn of praise, belonging to one common glory enjoyed by all, still will it be always new to the taste and new in its sweetness, for it will retain for ever the same melody it had when first it was chanted. The joy of the Saints never grows grey and never fades, in the same way as their bodies never grow old; since he who created the heavens to endure to the end of so many ages will make the flower of his glory ever green and never suffer it to wither.

§ 5.—*On the fourth joy of the soul, from the glory of the body.*

17.—What we have just described is essentially the glory of the soul. But that just Judge and generous Father is not content to glorify only the souls, but in honour of them will also glorify their bodies and make room for them in his royal palace. Oh lover of men! Oh thou who honourest the good! What canst thou see in this corruptible flesh, with all its animal passions to make room for it in the sanctuary of heaven? That flesh fitted only to be tied up in the stall, how shall it find a place amongst the angels in heaven? Consign, Oh Lord, dust to dust, it is not fitting that earth should be placed above heaven.

18.—But he who said to Abraham; “Behold I will bless Ismael and increase and multiply him exceedingly though he
Gen. xvii. be the son of a slave, for the love I have for thee,” desires to confer this favour on the bodies of the saints, from regard to the relationship they bore to their souls. God also desires that that which helped to bear the burthen should

partake of the reward; and that as the soul, for conforming in this life to the will of God is admitted hereafter to partake of the glory of God, so the body which in opposition to its natural inclinations conformed itself to the will of the soul, shall hereafter also share in her glory. Thus will the just be glorified both in body and soul, and according to the prophet, *Isai. lxi.* will possess the land in twofold goodness, viz. ~~by~~ the glory of the soul and of the body.

19.—What next shall I say of the glory of the senses, each of which shall there enjoy its peculiar delight and its special glory? The eyes brilliant and shining brighter than the sun shall look on those royal palaces and glorified bodies, those beautiful plains and numberless objects worthy of admiration. The ears shall be charmed with such sweet music that one voice alone would suffice to lull the hearts of a whole world. The sense of smelling shall be regaled with the sweetest perfumes, not such passing fragrance as emanates here on earth, but abundant as the other glories of heaven. So also shall the taste be gratified with incredible and exquisite savours, not for the maintenance of life but for the fuller perfection and completion of every glory. What then will be the feelings of the souls of the blessed, when in reward of their mortification and guard over the senses for so short a time, they shall find themselves flooded in that abyss of glory without any bound or termination to their abundance of delights? Oh happy labours! Oh well rewarded toils! Oh one only thing not to be talked about, but to be felt, to be loved and to be sought, at the cost of a thousand lives had we them to bestow for it!

§ 6.—*On the fifth joy, which consists in the eternity of the happiness of glory.*

20.—Let us now consider the extent of the duration of this great happiness: which alone should suffice to make us lift up our voices and call upon every trouble to rain upon us,

to enable us to shew our gratitude for such immense rewards awaiting us, which will endure for more thousands of years than there are stars in the firmament: more hundreds of thousands of years than drops of water have ever fallen upon the earth; which will last in fine as long as God shall be God,

Psalm cxlv. 10. for ever and ever, as it is written; "The Lord shall reign for ever." And again, "Thy kingdom is a

Psalm cxliv. 13. kingdom of all ages; and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations."

21.—Then, Oh Father of mercies, and God of all consolation! I beseech thee, Oh Lord, through the bowels of thy compassion, that I may not be deprived of this sovereign good. Oh Lord my God who hast thought fit to create me after thy own image and likeness and make me capable of enjoying thee, satisfy this breast which thou hast given me since it was created for thee. May my portion, Oh my God,

Psalm cxli. 6. be in the land of the living; give me not, Oh Lord, either rest or riches in this world, save everything for me there. I wish not to remain with the sons of Reuben
Numbers xxxii. in the land of Galaad and to lose the right to the Land of Promise. "One thing only have I begged of

Psalm xviii. the Lord and that I will always seek that I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my life."

CHAPTER XVII.

MEDITATION FOR SUNDAY NIGHT, ON THE DIVINE BENEFITS.

1.—Having made the sign of the cross accompanied by the preparation mentioned in the second chapter, take as the subject for thy meditation the divine benefits, in order to return thanks to God for them, and the more to warm thy love towards him from whom thou hast received so many favours, also the better to excite thy compunction for the many offences thou hast committed against so kind a benefactor.

2.—And though these benefits are innumerable, they may all be considered under five heads, viz. the benefits of our cre-

ation, our preservation, our redemption, and creation, and also the secret benefits which each one is conscious to himself of having received.

3.—As respects the first, that of creation, consider first attentively what thou wast before thou wast created and what God did for thee and gave thee without any merit on thy part; viz. thy body, with its members and senses; and thy beautiful soul created after his own image and likeness for so high a purpose as the enjoyment of God through its three noble faculties, the understanding the memory and the will. Consider well that the gift of such a soul was a gift of infinite value, since there is clearly no skill or ability in any of the inferior orders of creation, which man does not possess in a more perfect degree and which through the powers of his mind he is unable to control. Hence it is evident that this gift alone contained within itself every other gift.

4.—As respects the benefit of preservation, see how thy whole existence hangs upon the Providence of God, how thou couldst not live for a single instant, nor perform the slightest act, but through him; how he created all things in the world for thy use, even the very angels of heaven has he deputed to

Heb. i.

guard and assist thee. Then reflect on the

Mark xi.

health with which he has blessed thee, the strength, the life, the nourishment, and all other temporal blessings. And above all weigh well the miseries and disasters which thou seest daily befalling others and in which thou thyself mightest have been involved but for the protecting compassion of the Almighty.

5.—As regards the benefit of thy redemption, consider two things. First, how many and how great have been the blessings derived from it; and secondly, how many and how great the sufferings of our Lord both in his body and in his most sacred soul to obtain these benefits for thee.

6.—As regards the benefit of thy vocation, consider first the great goodness of God in making thee a christian, in call-

ing thee to the faith by means of thy most holy baptism, and making thee a partaker in the other sacraments. And if after this call, having lost thy innocence he drew thee out of sin, restored thee to his grace and set thee on the road to salvation, how canst thou sufficiently acknowledge this benefit? What infinite mercy was it not to preserve thee so long, to bear with thy manifold sins, to send thee such inspirations, and not cut the thread of thy life as he did that of so many situated just as thou wast? And finally to call thee with such abundance of graces as to raise thee from death to life and open thy eyes to behold eternal light? What mercy has he not shewn thee, after thy conversion, in bestowing upon thee the grace to avoid relapsing into sin and the power to overcome the enemy; and the blessing of final perseverance in virtue? This is that water early and late which God promised by the Prophet Joel, saying,

Joel II. 23.

“And you Oh children of Sion, rejoice and be joyful in the Lord your God; because he hath given you a teacher of justice, and he will make the early and the latter rain to come down for you as in the beginning.” That is to say; that persevering grace with which commenced the sowing of all virtues, and then that subsequent and final grace, with which the sowing is brought to a prosperous harvest.

7.—These are general and acknowledged benefits, but there are other hidden ones known only to the recipients, and some so hidden, that even the receiver knows them not, but only he who confers them. How often hast thou, in punishment of thy pride, or negligence or ingratitude, deserved that the hand of God should be lifted against thee, and that he should cast thee off, as he has numbers of others from the same cause, and has not done so by thee? From what evils and occasions of evil has not God by his providence preserved thee, loosening the nets of the enemy, anticipating his plans and disconcerting his plots and designs? How often has he not done for each of us that which he said to St. Peter;

Luke xxii. 31 & 32.

“Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired

to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not?" Who then but God can know these secrets? Man may occasionally be aware of positive benefits, but privative benefits consisting in delivering us from evils, who can know them? Therefore for all these as for the rest it is right we should give thanks to the Lord and know how much we are out of our reckoning and how much more we owe than we are able to pay, since we are incapable of understanding our liabilities.

8.—Having finished the meditation make a thanksgiving, an offering and petition as mentioned in the second chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ON THE DIVINE BENEFITS, WHERE THE SUBJECT OF THE LAST
MEDITATION IS CONSIDERED AT GREATER LENGTH.

§ 1.—*On the feelings with which God regards ingratitude for his favours, on the chastisements he inflicts on those who are guilty of it, and on the advantages which accrue from gratitude.*

1.—One of the bitterest complaints made by our blessed Saviour against man and for which he will be called to answer most strictly on the great day of account, is ingratitude for divine favours. With this complaint, the Prophet Isaiah commences his prophecy, calling upon heaven and earth to testify against the ingratitude and forgetfulness of the wicked,

Isai. i.

"Hear Oh ye heavens, and give ear earth, for the Lord hath spoken, I have brought up children, and exalted them; but they have despised me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel hath not known me, and my people hath not understood." Is it not then marvellous that man should forget what even the beasts remember? And as St. Jerome remarks on this passage; "He does not compare man with other animals of more intelligence, as with the dog, which for his morsel of food defends his master's house, but with the ox and the ass, stupid and

mean animals, to give us to understand that the ungrateful are not like animals in general but more like brutes, that is, more brutal than the ordinary kind of animals."

2.—What punishment then does this brutish conduct merit? God has in store many kinds of punishment for the ungrateful, but the fittest and most common is to withdraw favours once conferred, since the giver has reaped nothing from them but ingratitude. "For," as St. Bernard remarks, "ingratitude is a scorching wind which dries up the stream of divine mercy, the fountain of clemency and the current of grace."

3.—In the same way as ingratitude is the cause of such great evils, so on the other hand is gratitude the source of the greatest benefits, and of three especially. First of the love of God, "Because," as Aristotle observes, "good is lovely in itself and everyone is most disposed to love his own good." As men then are by nature such lovers of themselves and of their own welfare, when they clearly see that all they possess is the pure gift of their Sovereign Benefactor, they are naturally inclined to love and cherish Him from whom all their blessings come. Hence it is that amongst the most profitable considerations for stimulating the love of God, one of the chief is the consideration of the divine benefits, for every one of these acts as a brand to revive and inflame the fire of this love. Consequently the consideration of many of these benefits is like uniting many brands that the flame of this fire may burn brighter and brighter.

4.—This consideration is also useful to awaken love of the service of God, in consequence of the great obligation man is under to Him to whom he owes so much, because, if even birds and beasts from this motive answer to the voice of those who call them, and obey like rational beings the orders given them, how much more fitting is it that he should do so, who has received so much more and is so much better qualified to appreciate it?

5.—It serves also to awaken in our souls sorrow and repentance for our sins. For when men seriously consider on the one hand the multitude of blessings they have received from God, and on the other the multitude of their offences against him, how can they avoid blushing for shame and being confounded at the contrast? It is well for them to see the greatness of their wickedness compared with the greatness of that sovereign goodness which has so long persevered in doing good to them, though they only requited it with evil.

6.—For these three ends therefore should man reflect on the divine benefits, as well as for the purpose of returning thanks to God for them; and thus in meditating he should carefully go over each in its turn, urging his heart at one time to the love of him to whom he owes so much, at another to a desire to serve him, at another to sorrow and repentance for his sins, and at another to offer a sacrifice of praise and gratitude for them, they being the young calves which the prophet desired us to offer up to God as a sacrifice of acknowledgment for benefits received.

7.—Though these benefits are innumerable, we propose here to treat only of five principal ones to which all the rest may be reduced; namely, the benefit of creation, preservation, redemption and vocation; and lastly the particular and hidden benefits which each one is conscious to himself of having received.

8.—It is by no means requisite that all these benefits should be considered at the same time; one is sufficient or two or three well weighed and digested, because the subjects for meditation are not to be taken in the lump, like a task to be worked out, but like daily nourishment, which taken in moderation, digests the better and is all the more healthy.

§ 2.—*On the benefit of Creation.*

9.—Commencing then first with the benefit derived from our creation, the better to appreciate its greatness, thou

shouldst first most deeply reflect upon what thou wast before thy creation. This is one of the most serious pieces of advice which the masters of a spiritual life are accustomed to enforce on this subject, both for making us comprehend the greatness of the blessing itself as for the annihilation, so they name it, which it is for a man clearly and palpably of himself to see that he is absolutely less than nothing. Consider then how many years thou hast lived to this day, not a thousand, nor a hundred, but only as it were from yesterday up to to-day; it is well to know that but a short time ago thou wast, at least thy soul was, nothing, *ab eterno* thou wast nothing, and thou mightest have been always nothing, which is to be less than earth, less than air, and less even than straw, in a word nothing.

10.—See then how nothing can of itself do nothing, not even deserve that another should do anything for it, since that which is not can neither work nor avail itself of the work of others. Whilst thou wast buried in that darkness and in that deep abyss of nothing, it pleased God in his infinite goodness and mercy, without any merit of thine, and out of pure kindness, to exercise his power and omnipotence upon thee and to withdraw thee with his powerful hand from that darkness and that deep abyss of nothingness and make thee something. “And not only,” says St. Augustin, “something, but a man, one of the noblest created beings in the world, not a bird or a stone or a serpent. He gave thee that being which thou hast, he formed and organized that body, he furnished it with all its parts, both members and senses with such marvellous foresight and skill, that every one of them if well considered is an object of the greatest wonder and a truly great benefit.” This is that benefit which Holy Job humbly acknowledged, when he

Job x. 8, 9, 11, 12. said, “Thy hands, Oh Lord, have made me, and fashioned me wholly round about.” “Remember I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay, and thou wilt bring me into dust again.” “Thou hast clothed me with

skin and flesh, thou hast put me together with bones and sinews; thou hast granted me life and mercy, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit."

11.—Then what shall I say of the nobleness of thy soul and of the lofty end for which she was created, and of the image after which she was made, and of her capacity? Her image is that of God himself, because in truth there is nothing on earth more like unto God nor by study of which we can arrive at a clearer knowledge of him. Hence the ancient philosophers and especially Anaxagoras, knew no more appropriate name by which to designate God, than "the mind," meaning thereby a rational soul, from the great similitude they discovered between her and God. Hence arises the impossibility of perfectly understanding the substance of our soul, for inasmuch as she so closely resembles the divine substance, which is incomprehensible to us in this life, for the same reason she is herself incomprehensible.

12.—As then the end for which this noble creature was created is conformable to this dignity, so she was evidently created for the participation in the glory and happiness of God, to dwell in his house, to eat at his table, to share in his joys, to be arrayed in the robes of his immortality and to reign for ever with him. Hence the wonderful capacity of the soul is so distending that all created objects and all the riches of the world combined, can no more satisfy her longings than can a grain of millet fill the world.

13.—How can we then repay the Lord for this great bounty? If we are so indebted to our parents in the flesh for having contributed to the formation of our bodies, how much more are we indebted to our heavenly Parent, who through these means made the body, and without them created the soul which beyond comparison is more excellent than the body, and without which the body would be no more than a rotten dunghill? What are our parents more than the tool with which God wrought one portion of the work? How much

more art thou indebted to the principal who did the work ? And if thou owest so much to that which did only one part, how much more dost thou owe to him who did all ? If thou prizest the sword with which the City was taken, how much more the King who wielded it ?

§ 3.—*On the benefit of Preservation.*

14.—But God not satisfied with thy creation in such honour and glory has ever since preserved thee and watched over thee, as he says himself by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah. "I am the Lord thy God that teach thee profitable things,
Isaiah xlviii. 17. and govern thee in the way that thou walkest."

Many mothers satisfied with having suffered the pains of childbirth, shrink from the troubles of nursing and hire a nurse to discharge their duties. But it is not so here, for the same Lord takes upon himself all the duties, so as to be both the mother who bore us, and the nurse that suckled us with the milk and abundance of his providence, as he testifies by the mouth of his prophet, saying, "And I was like to a foster-father to Ephraim, I carried them in my
Osee xi. 3.

arms, and they knew not that I healed them." Thus was one and the same the Maker and the Conservator of his work. Both the one and the other are plainly acknowledged by the royal prophet in these words, "All expect of thee that thou give them food in season. What thou givest to them they shall
Psalm ciii. 27,
28, 29. gather up; when thou openest thy hand they shall be filled with good. But if thou turnest away thy face, they shall be troubled; thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fall, and shall return to their dust." In the same manner as the movements and works of a clock depend upon the weights acting upon them, and when the connexion between them is suspended, the whole of the ingenious mechanism must also stop, so every motion of this great machine of the world, depends upon the weight of Divine Providence, failing which, only for a single instant, the world would be paralyzed.

15.—But think for an instant, how many benefits are included in this one. Every instant and moment of thy life forms a portion of it, for thou couldst not exist one single second, if God withdrew from thee his watchful eye. All created things in the world form a portion of it, since we see that all of them contribute towards it. So that thine are the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon and the stars are thine, the sea and the fishes therein, the birds of the air and the trees and all animals, and finally all things are thine, since they are all dedicated to thy use. This is the benefit so much wondered at by the prophet, when he said: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that
Psalm viii. 5. thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little less than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honour: and hast set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast subjected all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen; moreover the beasts also of the fields; the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea, that pass through the paths of the sea. Oh Lord, our Lord, how admirable is thy name in all the earth!”

16.—And not content with having devoted to this object all visible creatures, it hath pleased him in his great mercy, to devote also the invisible, those noble intelligences who minister before him and behold his divine face, as according
Heb. i. Matt. xviii. to St. Paul, they are all officers in the household of God, to whom he has entrusted the tutelage and protection of man. Lastly he engaged all the world in thy service, that thou mightest engage thyself entirely in his, and he desired that there should be no creature on earth or in the heavens above that should not minister to thy advantage, that there might be nothing left thee unconsecrated to his service.

17.—But even passing all this aside, thou shouldst never forget the favours that God has shewn thee in delivering thee from the numberless calamities and miseries which we see daily befalling others. One is a cripple, one blind, another

lame, another with broken legs, another a martyr to the stone or gout or similar complaints. For surely this world is nothing but a sea of infinite troubles, and thou canst enter scarcely a dwelling in all this land of Egypt without encountering lamentations and groans. Wilt thou tell me now, who gave thee this bull of exemption? Who privileged thee to walk unscathed amongst such a crowd of wounded? Why art thou left standing amongst so many lying prostrate? Art not thou a man like all the rest, a sinner like them, a son of Adam as they all are? If these evils have befallen them, either from natural causes or their own excesses, how is it that thou under similar circumstances, hast escaped similar consequences? Who withheld on thy behalf the effects of similar causes? What stemmed the rushing waters and saved thee from the general deluge, but divine grace? After pondering well on this, thou wilt find that all the ills of the world are for thy benefit, and for every one of them thou owest special gratitude and love. In the same way that we find all the good things of this world are benefits conferred upon thee inasmuch as they tend to thy preservation, so also do we know that all the ills of the world are also benefits conferred on thee inasmuch as God hath delivered thee from them.

§ 4.—*On the benefit of our Redemption.*

18.—Let us come now to the inestimable benefit of our redemption, though it would be better in sacred silence to bow down and adore this mystery, than profane it with mortal lips. Thou hadst forfeited through sin thy primitive innocence and the grace in which thou wast created, and divine justice might have left thee in that wretched state, as it left Satan, with none to intercede for him, but God willed it not so, but on the contrary turning anger into compassion, he chose to confer the greatest favours where he had suffered the greatest affronts. And having it in his power to repair the evil committed by sending an angel or archangel or by many other means, he preferred coming himself in person; and having it

in his power to come in majesty and glory, he preferred coming in humility and poverty, the more to make thee appreciate this great benefit, and oblige thee the more by this his own example, and to redeem thee more abundantly with a treasure so priceless, and to shew thee more clearly the love he bore thee, that thou mightest love him in like manner ; also to further shew how much he prized thee, in order to induce thee to place all thy hopes in him. Well may the Prophet Isaiah amplify this in these words, according to the translation in the Septuagint. "In all the afflictions of men

Isaiah lxiii.

he was not troubled nor did he weary in suffering for them, he desired not to send an ambassador or an angel to redeem them ; but he in his own person from the greatness of his compassion sought to come and redeem them, and bear them upon his shoulders for ever, although they were ungrateful for this benefit, and afflicted him and provoked the anger of the Holy Spirit."

19.—And if thou owest so much to thy Saviour for seeking in person to effect thy redemption, how much more deeply wilt thou not be indebted for the manner in which he effected it with so many sufferings ? A king confers a great boon upon the robber to whom he remits the lashes he has been sentenced to undergo : but that the same king should choose to undergo the lashes in his stead, is an act of unheard-of kindness. What numbers of benefits are included in this one ? Raise thy eyes to that sacred wood, and behold all the wounds and agonies that the Lord of Glory is suffering there, each one of which is an inestimable benefit to thee. Behold that most innocent body all covered with blood, torn with wounds and marked with bruises and blood streaming from every part. Behold that most sacred head bowed down and drooping upon the shoulder, and that divine face on which angels love to gaze, how wan and streaked with blood, some still running fresh and crimson and some dried and fastened in dark clots of gore. Behold that most beautiful face, the

loveliest of all that ever were, once the delight of every eye, how all the flower of its loveliness has perished! Behold that most holy Nazarite more pure than snow, whiter than milk or the finest ivory, now blacker than charcoal and so disfigured and foul that even his own knew him not. Behold that sacred mouth, pallid and stamped with the hue of death, those blood stained blackened lips how they move to beg pardon and mercy for his executioners.

20.—Lastly look at him on every side and thou wilt not find one spot untouched by suffering, from head to foot is he covered with wounds. That bright brow and those eyes more beautiful than the sun, are dimmed and darkened by the film of death. Those ears accustomed to the canticles of heaven, now ring with the blasphemies of sinners. Those comely and extended arms which sustain and uphold the world, are stretched disjointed on the cross. Those hands that created the heavens and injured no one, are pierced and torn with hard nails. Those sacred feet that never walked in the paths of sinners, are mortally wounded and transfixed. But above all

Cant. i.

behold that bed on which lies and sleeps the heavenly spouse at mid-day, how narrow and how hard it is. Behold he has not where to lay his head. Oh priceless head how can I see thee so wearied for my sake! Oh sanctified body conceived of the Holy Ghost! How can I see thee so wounded and bruised for the love of me! Oh sweet and loving breast! What means that gaping wound? What all that blood? Woe is me, to see thee for the love of me pierced so deeply with a lance! Oh rigorous cross! Be not so rigid, soften a little thy hardness, bend down to me thy extended boughs and lower that precious fruit that I may strive to taste it. Oh cruel nails! Loosen those feet and innocent hands; come and pierce my heart for it is I that have sinned, and not he. Oh Good Jesus why are all these sufferings for thee? What has death to do with thee, what the nails, and what the cross? Truly with much reason said the prophet: "His

Isaiah. work shall be different and foreign from this." What more foreign to and what more different from life than death, what more foreign to glory than punishment, what to the height of sanctity and innocence than the brand of a sinner? Truly Oh Lord is that name and character foreign to thee. Oh thou true Jacob, who in strange dress and borrowed garments obtained for us thy Father's blessing, since by assuming the likeness of a sinner thou hast conquered sin! Oh ineffable goodness! Oh mercy undeserved! Oh unheard-of love! Oh incomprehensible charity! Tell me, Oh Lord, what thou sawest in us, what service had we done thee, how have we compelled thee to suffer such torments? Oh miraculous bounty! which without any merit of ours, without the slightest necessity for us, hast chosen solely of thy grace and mercy to make the road safe for us. "The mercy and Timothy iii. clemency of the Lord," says the Apostle, "have been manifested, not through the works of justice which we have performed, but through his great mercy by which he has saved us." Oh, how much did our Lord desire us to appreciate this mercy when he spoke these memorable words through the mouth of Isaiah; "Thou hast not called upon Isaiah xliii. 22. me Oh Jacob; neither hast thou laboured about me Oh Israel; thou hast not offered me the ram of thy holocaust, nor hast thou glorified me with thy victims." "But thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thy iniquities. I am, I am he that blot out thy iniquities for my own sake, and I will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance, and let us plead together; tell if thou hast anything to justify thyself."

21.—Then Oh most element, Oh most sweet Lord! What have I wherewith to repay thee for so great a benefit? Had I all the lives of all the children of Adam, and all the days and years of ages, and could I bear all the sufferings of all men past present and future, all would be nothing to repay thee for the least of the sufferings thou hast undergone for me.

And since I have no means of satisfying this debt, I would wish at all events, Oh my God, to repay thee by never forgetting thy bounty. I beseech thee, Oh Lord, through the bowels of thy infinite charity, so to wound my heart with thy wounds, and so to inebriate my soul with thy blood, that wherever I turn myself I may always see thee crucified, and that whosoever I fix my eyes every object may dazzle me with thy blood. Let this be my only comfort, to be always crucified with thee, and this my only affliction, never to think of any thing but thee. Look, Oh my God, at the price for which thou hast purchased me, and suffer not so precious a treasure to be lost by me, and suffer me not to be like an abortive son, borne by his mother in sorrow but not destined to enjoy the fruit of life.

§ 5.—*On the fourth benefit, that of our Vocation.*

22.—Consider next the benefit of our vocation or call to God, without which all other benefits would only serve for the greater condemnation of man. It must here be remarked that there are two divine calls; one to the faith by means of the sacrament of baptism; the other to grace, after the loss of baptismal innocence.

23.—Reflect on the great benefit of the first call through baptism, by which thou wast cleansed from the stain of original sin and delivered from the power of the devil, made a child of God and heir to his kingdom. There he took thy soul for his spouse, adorned her with all requisites for that state, with grace and the virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost and with many richer jewels and presents than were given to Rebecca

Genesis xxiv.

when she was espoused to Isaac. What hadst thou done to deserve so great a benefit? How many thousands, not to say of men, but of nations and people, by the just judgment of God have never received this blessing? What would have been thy fate hadst thou been born amongst them? Thou wouldst not have known the true God, but been

a worshipper of stocks and stones. How much art thou indebted to God, amongst such a crowd of lost sheep for folding thee amongst his flock and amongst those who were to be born within the pale of the Church and to be fed with the milk of the apostles and with the blood of Christ."

24.—If after the favour of this call thou hast forfeited by sin thy baptismal innocence, and God has notwithstanding vouchsafed to call thee a second time or perhaps many times, how much more art thou not indebted to him for this benefit?

Luke xiii.

How many benefits are included in this? It was a benefit for him to expect thee so long and give thee time for repentance; to bear with thee in thy sins without cutting down the barren tree which encumbered the land and was watered to no purpose with the showers of heaven. It was another benefit to tolerate thy many grievous sins without casting thee headlong into hell, where many perhaps are now suffering for lesser sins than thine. It was a further benefit to send thee so many good inspirations, even in the midst of thy sins, and to persevere so long in calling thee to him in spite of thy offences against him. It was a further benefit to put an end to thy obstinacy and to summon thee with a voice powerful enough to raise the dead to life, that like another Lazarus thou mightest come forth from the dark sepulchre of thy ini-

John ii.

quities, not bound hand and foot but freed from the bonds of the enemy. But above all, what a benefit was it not only there to pardon thee all thy past sins, but to give thee grace to avoid returning to them and to bestow upon thee all the other blessings which the prodigal son received upon his return home, that with all these thou mightest walk forth as a child of God, scorn the allurements of the devil, triumph over the world, take delight in the things of God before so distasteful, and feel disgust at the things of the world before so agreeable.

25.—But what if after this, thou considerest how many have been denied this benefit which has been so generously

granted to thee? To thee, as great a sinner, and as unworthy of the call as they, that whilst they continue in their wretched state, it should have pleased God to call thee to a state of health and grace? How canst thou shew too much gratitude, how canst thou repay this favour? What will be thy feelings, when in consequence of this call thou shalt one day find thyself in the enjoyment of God in heaven for all eternity, and see others once thy companions and associates, from want of similar grace, suffering for ever the pains of hell? Oh, how much ought this grace to be estimated! Tell me, when the fortunate thief who with only one word obtained everlasting life, saw himself surrounded with such great glory, and saw also his companion in such torments in hell and recollected that he too was once also a thief like the other, and was punished for his thefts like the other, and a few moments before like the other was blaspheming Christ, and that notwithstanding all this, those divine eyes turned to look upon him and gave light to him leaving the other in darkness, what bounds would there be to his gratitude for such a favour? What limit to his delight? With what astonishment would he look on such a judgment? With what intense love would he burn for him who chose to confer upon him so admirable a gift? Should this appear to thee such an immense benefit, recollect that it is no more than Christ has done for thee, when he fixed on thee the eyes of his tender compassion, but called not with the same call thy friend or neighbour, who for all thou knowest, has offended less than thee. See then, how much thou owest to the Lord, and the reasons thou hast to desire to suffer death for the love of him.

26.—But consider further how much this benefit cost thy Saviour. He bestowed it on thee free gratis out of pure bounty; it cost him his blood and his life, since it is evident without that, our sins could not have been pardoned nor our wounds cured. It is said that the pelican, when she finds her young ones dead, tears open her own breast with her beak and

with the flowing blood bedews and sprinkles them and so restores them to warmth and life. If thou desirest to comprehend the greatness of this benefit, remember when thou wast dead in sin, that compassionate Pelican moved by the bowels of his mercy, pierced his sacred breast with a lance and bedewed the mortal wounds of thy soul with his blood and thus by his death gave life to thee, and by his wounds healed thine. Thou wilt not be ungrateful for so great and costly a benefit, if thou wilt recollect, as the Lord admonishes, the day when thou camest out of Egypt. This was thy passover, the day of thy resurrection, for on it didst thou pass by the Red Sea of the blood of Christ to the Land of Promise, and on it thou wast raised from death to life.

§ 6.—*On particular Benefits.*

27.—What we have hitherto spoken of are general benefits, there are other particular ones specially bestowed upon each individual, which can only be known to the recipient. Under this head are included various blessings and gifts of fortune or nature or of grace bestowed upon each one specially: also many misfortunes and dangers, both to soul and body, from which God in his mercy has delivered each one; for which benefits as well as for the general ones our gratitude is due, because they are more definite pledges of the special love and providence of God. It is impossible to write in a book these kinds of benefits; but everyone should inscribe them upon his own heart and add them to the others and return thanks to God for them.

28.—Others there are more hidden still, which the recipient is even unconscious of, for example particular dangers and hidden snares which God averts and destroys by his providence, because he knows the injury they might occasion us. Who can count the temptations from which God has protected him? The occasions of sin from which he has delivered him? How often he has disconcerted the plans and

destroyed the snares of the enemy to prevent him being entrapped? The devil himself said of Holy Job, "That God had
Luke xxii. Job i. encircled him on all sides, that nothing should hurt him;" and thus is God accustomed to keep his own, guarded like a precious vase of crystal, so that no one may commence an attack upon them.

29.—As one may have received from God various secret gifts, without being conscious of them; so in the same way he may and often does commit many secret sins without being aware of them. Thus with regard to this kind of sins we should daily pray with the prophet and say, "From my secret
Psalm xviii. sins deliver me Oh God;" we should also every day give thanks to God for this kind of benefit, that no sin be unrepented of and no blessing be unacknowledged.

THE END OF THE SEVEN MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY NIGHT
IN THE WEEK, AND OF THE FIRST PART.

A TREATISE
ON
PRAYER AND MEDITATION,

WITH REFLECTIONS ON THE PRINCIPAL MYSTERIES
OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH.

PART II.

CHAPTER XIX.

TREATING UPON THE SEVEN OTHER MEDITATIONS ON THE SACRED
PASSION, AND ON THE MANNER OF MAKING THEM.

1.—After the preceding meditations others follow upon the sacred passion and resurrection of Christ, and on the different stages of his holy life.

2.—Here we may remark that there are six points to be borne in mind in meditating on the passion of Christ: the immensity of his sufferings, to awaken our compassion; the heinousness of our offences, which is the cause of them, to excite our detestation for sin; the greatness of the benefit conferred, to stimulate our gratitude; the excellence of the divine love and charity, to inflame our love; the special appropriateness of the mystery, to stimulate our admiration of it; the many divine virtues there exhibited, to prompt our imitation of them. Accordingly, whilst we are engaged in

the meditation we should at times incline our hearts to compassionate the sufferings of our Saviour, which were the most bitter in the world, whether we regard the delicate tenderness of his frame, the intensity of his love for us, or the fact that they were all endured unrelieved by any sort of consolation.

3.—At other times we should study to draw from them motives of sorrow for our sins, inasmuch as they were the cause of his great sufferings. At other times we should strive to extract reasons for love and gratitude, considering the greatness of the love here shewn to us and the greatness of the benefits conferred upon us by our most plentiful redemption, at such cost to him, and of such profit to us.

4.—At other times we should raise up our eyes to the contemplation of the wonderful means adopted by God to deliver us from our miseries; that is, to satisfy our debts, to relieve our necessities, to enable us to deserve his favours, to humble our pride, to inspire us with contempt for the world, love of the cross, of poverty, of hardships, of injuries, and of all other virtuous and honest sufferings.

5.—At other times we should direct our attention to the examples of virtue displayed in his most holy life and death, to his meekness, patience, obedience, mercy, poverty, charity, humility, benignity, and modesty, and to every other virtue which in all his deeds and words shone forth more brilliant than the stars of heaven, to induce us to imitate what we see in him, in order that the spirit and grace which by this means we derive from him may not be unproductive, and that we may thus advance to him, by means of him. This is the highest and the most profitable mode of meditation upon the sacred passion of Christ, viz. by way of imitation, because by imitating his example, we arrive at that transformation spoken of by the apostle, and are able to say with him; "I live, rather not I, but Christ liveth in me."

6.—Furthermore it is well at every stage to keep Christ present before our eyes, and to take care that he is present

before them in his sufferings ; and to pay attention not only to the history of his passion, but also to all the attendant circumstances, particularly those four upon which we have already touched. Who is he who suffers? The omnipotent, infinite, and immense God. For whom does he suffer? For the most ungrateful creature in the world. How does he suffer? With the greatest humility, charity, benignity, meekness, mercy, patience and modesty. Why does he suffer? For no interest of his own, through no desert of ours, but through the bowels of his infinite compassion and mercy. We must not only regard his external, but much more his internal sufferings ; for the soul of Christ is a much wider field for contemplation than his body, both for sympathy in its sufferings as well as all the other affections and considerations incident thereto.

With this short preface, we now proceed to divide and arrange the mysteries of the sacred passion.

CHAPTER XX.

MEDITATION ON THE WASHING OF THE FEET OF THE DISCIPLES
AND ON THE INSTITUTION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT ;
FOR MONDAY MORNING.

Having made the sign of the cross with the preparation mentioned in the second chapter, the subject for meditation will be the washing of the feet and the institution of the most blessed Sacrament.

§ 1.—*The text of the Evangelists is as follows.*

1.—“ And when the hour was come he sat down and the
Luke xxii. 14, 15. twelve apostles with him, and he said to them ; with desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer.” “ And whilst they were eating he said ; Amen I say to you that one of you is about to betray me.
Matt. xxvi. 21. And they being very much troubled began every one to say ; Is it I, Lord? But he answering said ;

He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, he shall betray me. The Son of Man indeed goeth, as it is written of him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man shall be betrayed. It were better for him if that man had not been born. And Judas that betrayed him, answering said: Is it I, Rabbi? He saith to him; thou hast said it."

2.—"And when the supper was done, he riseth from supper and layeth aside his garments, and having taken a
John xiii 2-4. towel, girded himself. After that, he putteth water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. He cometh therefore to Simon Peter, and Peter saith to him, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered, and said to him; what I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith to him, thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him; If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with me. Simon Peter saith to him: Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him: He that is washed, needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly. And you are clean, but not all. For he knew who he was that would betray him; therefore he said, you are not all clean. Then after he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, being set down again, he said to them; know you what I have done to you? You call me Master, and Lord: and you say well, for so I am. If then I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also."

3.—"And after the washing was done, Jesus took bread,
Matt. xxvi. 26. and blessed and broke; and gave to his disciples and said; Take ye and eat: this is my body. And
Mark xiv. taking the chalice he gave thanks; and gave to them, saying; Drink ye all of this. For
Luke xii. this is my blood of the New Testament,
Cor. i. which shall be shed for many, unto remission of sins."

§ 2.—*A meditation on the foregoing texts.*

4.—Contemplate then, Oh my soul, thy sweet and kind Jesus at this supper, and admire his wonderful humility in rising from the table and washing the feet of his disciples. Oh Good Jesus! what art thou doing? Oh sweet Jesus! why does thy Majesty so debase itself? What wouldst thou feel, Oh my soul, to see thy God on bended knees before the feet of man, and before the feet of Judas? Oh cruel wretch! How comes it thy heart is not softened by this great humility? How is it thy feelings are not moved by this great meekness? Is it possible that thou art resolved upon selling this innocent Lamb? Is it possible that thou art not filled with compunction with this example? Oh fair and delicate hands! How can ye touch such filthy abominable feet? Oh most pure hands! How is it ye revolt not against washing those feet, about to wade through streams of your own blood? Oh, ye blessed spirits from above, behold the deeds of your Creator! Come from your heavenly dwellings to witness them, and ye will see him on bended knees at the feet of men, and say if ever he shewed such courtesy to you. Oh Lord, I have heard thy words and have trembled; I have considered thy works, and have stood astonished. Oh, happy apostles! How comes
Habac. iii. it ye do not tremble at the sight of this wonderful humility? Peter, what art thou doing? Dost thou consent to the Lord of Glory washing thy feet?

5.—Saint Peter filled with wonder and astonishment, when he saw his Lord on bended knees before him, began to say; thou Oh Lord, dost thou wash my feet? No, art thou not the son of the living God? Art thou not the Creator of the world, the beauty of heaven, the paradise of the angels, the refuge of man, the splendour of the glory of the Father, the fountain of the wisdom of God on high? Dost thou then wish to wash my feet? Thou the Lord of Majesty and Glory, dost thou wish to perform so mean an office? Thou that didst lay the earth upon its foundations, and didst beautify it with

so many wonderful things? Thou who holdest the world in thy hand, who rulest the heavens, who dividest the waters and regulatest the seasons, thou the universal cause, that beatifies the angels, directs the paths of men and governs all things with thy wisdom? Art thou about to wash my feet? Mine, the feet of a mortal man, naught but dust and ashes, a vessel of corruption, a creature full of vanity and ignorance and all sorts of miseries; and what is worse than misery full of sin? Thou, my Lord, and the Lord of all things! Thy exalted Majesty and the depth of my wretchedness compel me to refuse this. Vouchsafe then, Oh my Lord, to leave this office to servants; lay aside that towel; resume thy dress and thy seat at table; and stoop not to wash my feet. Will not the heavens blush at beholding a ceremony that lowers them beneath the earth, since thou placest those hands to which the Father entrusted the heavens and all things besides beneath the feet of men? See that all creation be not shocked at being put below other feet than thine. See lest the daughter of King Saul on beholding thee girded with

II Kings, vi. a towel like a servant, refuse to take thee as her Spouse or acknowledge thee as her God when thou art undertaking so mean an office.

6.—Thus said Peter, like a man who understood not yet the things of God, and who comprehended not the amount of glory that lay shrouded in that act apparently so mean. But our Saviour, who knew so well how, and longed so much, to leave us on that occasion such a wonderful example of humility, satisfied the simplicity and removed the scruples of his disciple immediately. Behold here, how much our Lord has done to induce us to be humble, for at the threshold of his passion, where he was about to shew wonderful examples of humility enough to astonish heaven and earth, not satisfied with them, he desired to add this further instance in order to recommend still more this virtue. Oh wonderful virtue how great must be thy value, since thou art so much praised, and

how thy value should be made known since thou art in so many ways brought to our notice! Oh humility preached and taught in the whole life of Christ, sung and praised by the
 Luke i. mouth of his Mother, flower of all virtues, divine loadstone that attractest to thyself the Creator of all things! He who despises thee will be despised by God, though he should dwell in the highest heaven, and he who embraces thee, will be embraced by God, though he be the greatest sinner in the world. Great are thy favours and wonderful is thy wealth. Thou appeasest men, thou delightest the angels, thou confoundest the devils, And thou tiest the hands of the Creator. Thou art the foundation of virtue, the death of vice, the mirror of virgins and the house of welcome of the most holy Trinity. He who binds without thee, scatters, he who builds not on thee, destroys; he who heaps up virtues without thee, will find them swept away with the dust before the face of the wind. Without thee the virgin is rejected at the gate of heaven, and with thee the public sinner is welcomed at the feet of Christ. Embrace then this virtue Oh ye Virgins, for it will be profitable to your virginity. Seek it Oh ye religious, for without it vain will be your religion. And not less so, ye who live in the world, for through it ye will be delivered from the snares of the world.

7.—Consider further how after washing the feet, he wiped them with the sacred towel with which he was girt; and lift up the eyes of the soul, and thou wilt in that act see prefigured the mystery of our redemption. See how that towel collected within its folds all the impurities of those feet which were unclean. And thus were they made clean, but the towel on the contrary would be soiled and dirty after the ceremony was finished. What then is there so unclean as man conceived in sin? And what more pure and beautiful than Christ conceived of the Holy Spirit? “My beloved is white and ruddy,” says the Spouse, “chosen out of thousands.” Thus did he who is so pure and beautiful choose

Cant. v. 10.

to take upon himself all the stains and impurities of our souls ; that is to say, the punishments due to our sins ; and leaving our souls purged and cleansed from their sins, he, as thou seest, stretched himself upon the cross, defiled and disfigured with them. Well may the angels behold with wonder this strange defilement, and ask, through the mouth of the Pro-

Isaiah lxiii. 2.

phet Isaiah, saying ; “ Why is thy apparel red, and thy garments like theirs that tread in the wine press ? ” Then if this blood and these stains are foreign, that is, are derived from our offences, tell me, Oh King of Glory, should not men have received their deserts and not thou ? Would not this ordure have been better cast upon its own dunghill than upon thee, the mirror of beauty ? What excess of compassion caused thee to desire so earnestly the purity of my soul, that thou shouldst bestow it upon me at such a cost and sacrifice of thy own comeliness ? Where is the man who would set himself to clean a dirty broken dish with a towel of golden cloth ? Blessed be thou, Oh Lord my God, and may thy angels ever bless thee, because thou hast sought to make thyself the clout of the world, taking upon thee all our stains and miseries, that is, the punishments of our sins, in order to deliver us from them.

8.—Consider next those words with which our Saviour concluded the ceremony, saying : “ I have given you an example that as I have done, so ye also may do.” These words not only have reference to this particular example of humility, but to all the actions and the whole life of Christ, which is the most perfect pattern of every virtue, especially of that of humility more especially figured on this occasion, as that happy martyr St. Cyprian most eloquently explains in a sermon, in these words : “ It was in the first place a wonderful work of patience and humility that his divine Majesty should choose to descend from heaven upon the earth, and

John i. Luke i.

Matt. iii. & v.

clothe himself in human clay ; and veiling the glory of his immortality should take

upon himself mortality in order that he who was innocent and

without sin might suffer the punishments due to sinners. The Lord desired to be baptized by his servant, and he who came to give remission of sins chose to be washed with the water of sinners. He who gives food to all, fasted forty days in the desert, and at the end bore the pangs of hunger, that we who hunger after the words of God and his grace might be supplied with the abundance thereof. He contended with the devil who tempted him, and satisfied with overcoming him punished him only with a rebuke. He treated not his disciples as a master does his servants but behaved to them with the love and kindness of a brother. And it is no wonder that he thus treated his obedient disciples, since he bore with Judas to the very last with such long enduring patience, eat at the same table with his enemy knowing his plots, without disclosing them, and refused not the false kiss of peace with which he betrayed him. Then what patience did he shew towards the Jews even to his last hour? How he laboured to bend their unbelieving hearts to the faith by his teaching; how he strove to subdue their ingratitude by his acts of kindness; how he replied with meekness to those who upbraided him; with what clemency he bore the insolence of the haughty; with what humility he bent before the anger of his enemies and persecutors; what pains he took to reclaim those who had murdered his prophets and were rebels against God, even to

Mar. xxvi. and xxvii. his last hour upon the cross. Then in that last hour before all his blood was spilt, and his cruel death accomplished, how great were the insults, and wonderful the patience with which he listened to them? How bitter the

John ix.

scoffs that mocked him? With what patience did he bear to be spit upon by those infernal mouths, he who with his own spittle had just given sight to the blind? How he bore their stripes, he, in whose name his disciples had with

John xix.

wonderful efficacy scourged the powers of darkness. How is he crowned with thorns, who crowns his martyrs with everlasting flowers? How is he smitten in the

face with the open palm, who bestows the palm of victory upon conquerors? How is he spoiled of his earthly dress who clothes the saints with the robes of immortality? How is he regaled with gall who gives us the bread of heaven, and his thirst allayed with vinegar who offers us the chalice of salvation?

Matt. xxvii.

That innocent one, that just one!

Mark xv.

Yea innocence itself and justice itself is num-

Isaiah lili.

bered amongst robbers, the eternal truth is

accused by false witnesses, the Judge of this world is tried by the wicked, and the Word of God receives sentence of death in silence. Behold how in the hour of death upon the cross of the Saviour of the world, the stars of heaven are darkened, the elements are disturbed, the earth trembles, night envelopes the day, and the sun to avoid the sight of such cruelty, turns aside his beams of light from the earth; but he speaks not, moves not, does not in the very agony of death display the majesty of his glory but to the last endures that long struggle, to bequeath to us a model of perfect patience. And even after all, if his butchers and executioners turn to repentance he at once receives them to his bosom and shuts upon no one the gates of his Church. What kindness, what endurance can compare with this, that the blood of Christ should give life, even to those who shed the blood of Christ? Such is and

Acts ix.

so great was the patience of Christ; had it not been such, and so great, there would not this day have been a St. Paul in the Church." So far St. Cyprian.

§ 3.—*On the most blessed sacrament, and on the various causes for which it was instituted.*

9.—One of the principal reasons for our Saviour coming into the world was his desire to inflame the hearts of men with the love of God. Therefore he says by St. Luke, "I came to cast fire upon the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?" This fire did our Saviour cast by conferring upon men such wonderful favours and performing such great works of love, to steal their hearts and inflame

Luke xli.

them with the fire of love. Since then every act of his most sacred life is directed to this object, so more particularly are those of its close, as the Evangelist St. John signifies, where
 John xlii. 1. he says, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." He then therefore conferred on them greater favours, and left them pledges of his love. The chief of these was the institution of the most blessed sacrament, and this may be clearly seen by attentively considering the reasons which led to its institution. To enable us to do this, open our eyes, Oh most sweet Saviour, and give us light to see the reasons that moved thy tender heart to institute and bequeath us this most wonderful sacrament.

10.—To comprehend something of this, thou must presuppose that no mortal tongue is able to express the infinite love that Christ entertains for his Spouse the Church, and consequently for every soul in a state of grace, each of which is also his Spouse. Therefore one of the things St. Paul the Apostle so prayed for and desired, was that God would give
 Ephes. iv. us grace to know the greatness of this love;
 Phillip. ii. which is so great as to exceed all created wisdom and knowledge, even that of the angels.

The first reason for the institution of this sacrament.

11.—This most sweet Bridegroom being about to take leave of this life and absent himself from his Spouse the Church, that his absence might not produce forgetfulness, left her as a remembrance this most holy sacrament, in which he himself remained present. He was desirous that between him and her there should be no less a pledge than himself to keep alive the remembrance of him. Therefore he then spoke those
 Luke xxii. endearing words: "Every time you shall do
 Cor. xi. this, do it in commemoration of me, in order to remind you of my great love for you and of the great things I am about to do and suffer for your salvation."

The second reason.

12.—This loving Bridegroom wished also during his long

absence to leave his Spouse a companion that she might not remain alone, and accordingly left her this holy sacrament, where he himself dwells, the best companion he could bequeath her.

The third reason.

13.—He desired at the same time also to suffer death for his Spouse and redeem and save her with the price of his blood; and in order that she might at her pleasure enjoy this treasure, he left her the keys of it in this sacrament, "Because," as St. Chrysostom says, "every time we approach it we put our lips to the side of Christ, we drink his precious blood and become partakers of this sovereign mystery." See then the conduct of those, who through laziness neglect to approach this high banquet and to enjoy this great and inestimable treasure. These are those unfortunate slothful ones of

Proverb xix. 24. whom the wise man spoke. "The slothful hideth his hand under his arm-pit, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth." What sloth can be greater, than that of him who to save the slight trouble of preparing himself for this sacrament is ready to lose the most precious treasure in the world?

The fourth reason.

14.—This heavenly Bridegroom was further anxious to be devotedly beloved by his Spouse, and consequently instituted this mysterious food, which by the words of consecration causes the worthy recipient to be touched and inflamed with love. Oh mystery to be engraved on the inmost recesses of our hearts! Tell me then, Oh man; if a prince became so much enamoured of a slave as to make her his wife and queen of all his dominions, what should we say of the earnestness of his love? And after the nuptials, should that slave begin to cool in her affections towards her husband, and he conscious of this should wander about distracted in search of some elixir to regain her waning love, how could we sufficiently express our admiration of the feelings prompting that prince

to such an act? But, Oh King of Glory, the excess of thy love did not satisfy thy heart with taking my soul for thy Spouse whilst I was the slave of thy enemy, but seeing her in spite of this cooling in her affection for thee, thou didst devise for her this mysterious food, and so changed it with the words of consecration as to confer on it the virtue of changing the souls of all who partook of it into thee, and of kindling in them the burning flames of love! Nothing shews love so much as the desire to be loved, and since thou hast so desired our love, as to seek it by such arts, who can henceforth doubt thy love? I know, Oh my Lord, if I only love thee, that thou lovest me. I know that I stand not in need of any new arts to draw thy heart to mine, like those thou hast discovered to draw mine to thine.

The fifth reason.

15.—Moreover this most sweet Bridegroom was about to absent himself from his Spouse; and as love brooks not the absence of its beloved, he wished not to leave entirely, but to depart so as still always partially to enjoy her company. He was no longer to remain with her, nor could she at that time follow him; and he invented this means to prevent an entire separation from each other. Therefore he instituted this divine sacrament, that by means of it our souls might be spiritually made one body with Christ, bound with chains of love so strong as with him to form only one being. For as food and he who eats it become one, in the same manner is it with our souls and Christ, "With this difference only," according to St. Augustin, "that Christ does not change himself into our souls, but changes our souls into himself; not by nature, but by love and similarity of life."

The sixth reason.

16.—He was also anxious to leave her a full assurance of a glorious and happy inheritance, that sustained by the hope of that, she might cheerfully submit to all the troubles and bitterness of this life. For nothing serves so well to induce us truly

to despise the things of this world, as the firm hope of obtaining what we are promised to enjoy in the next. Our Saviour would have us to understand this by those words he addressed

John xiv. 28.

to his disciples before his passion. "If you loved me, you would indeed be glad, because I go to the Father," as if he would say; it is so great a good for me to go to the Father, that though I go to him, through stripes and thorns, through nails and the cross, and through martyrdom and all the pains of this life, it is for an inestimable gain and a subject of joy for you. To fill the Spouse with a firm hope of this good, he left here as a pledge this inestimable treasure, worth all to be expected there, that she might not doubt that God would bestow that in a state of glory where she will live entirely as a spirit, since he has not refused it in this vale of tears, where she lives in the flesh.

The seventh reason.

17.—He was also desirous at the hour of his death to make his will, and to leave his Spouse a valuable bequest for her comfort, and he left her this the most valuable and profitable he could bestow. When Elias was about to leave this earth, he left his mantle to his disciple Eliseus, having no other property of which he could make him heir; and our Saviour and Master when about to ascend to heaven, left us here the mantle of his sacred body in this sacrament, making us as his children the heirs to this great treasure. With that mantle Eliseus crossed the waters of the Jordan without being drowned or even wet, and by the virtue and grace of this sacrament the faithful are able to pass through the waters of the vanities and tribulations of this life without sin and without danger.

The eighth reason.

18.—Finally he was desirous of bequeathing to our souls sufficient provision and sustenance for their support. For the soul has not less need of proper nourishment to support her spiritual life than has the body for its corporal life. But say,

why does the body require sustenance every day? No doubt because natural heat is always consuming its substance, and hence it is necessary daily to repair with sustenance the waste that is daily occasioned by this heat, otherwise man would soon lose all his strength and consequently perish. Oh would to God that men would learn by this the need they have of this divine sacrament and the wisdom and mercy of him who instituted it! Is it not certain that we have in our interiors a pestilential heat arising from sin, which consumes all the good within us? This is what inclines us to the love of the world and the flesh, and of all vices and pleasures, and thus separates us from God, makes us lukewarm in his love, numbs us for all that is good and invigorates us for everything wicked. Since then we bear within us this perpetual consumer so firmly rooted, ought we not always to be engaged in supplying that which is always being consumed? If the waste be continuous and the relief not, what can be expected but a continual sinking to end in total destruction? To prove this look at the conduct of the early Christians of the Primitive Church. See how they always partook of this food, lived upon it and obtained strength thereby not only sufficient to keep the law of God, but also to die for his love. But if men now-a-days are so weak and fallen away, it is because they eat not, hence they die of hunger, as signified by the prophet

Isai. v. 12.

where he said; "Therefore is my people led away captive, because they had not knowledge, and their nobles have perished with famine, and their multitude were dried up with thirst." For this then did that wise Physician, who had felt the pulse of our weakness, ordain this sacrament; and ordained it under the form of food, that the form under which it was instituted might point out its efficacy and the need our souls had of it.

19.—Was it possible for God to give the world a greater proof of his love than bequeathing to it his own body and blood for its maintenance and its cure? We often read in

history of mothers who have been driven by want and the pangs of hunger to lay hands upon their own children, and impelled by the love of life, have deprived their offspring of life to preserve their own. We have often read of this, but who ever read of a mother feeding her starving child with her own flesh? cutting off a limb to provide it with maintenance, cruel to herself out of compassion to it? No such mother was ever heard of; but he, more compassionate than any mother descended from heaven to thee, seeing that thou wast perishing of hunger, and that he had no better means to support thee than bestowing upon thee for thy sustenance his own flesh, here delivers himself to his executioners and to death, that thou mightest live upon this food. And not only on one occasion did he this, but anxious repeatedly to do so, he instituted this sacrament as a further proof of greater love; shewing in it, as he continues to provide for thee the same food, that he is always ready to do so, at the same cost, were it necessary for thee.

The ninth reason.

20.—After this thou shouldst consider that this most holy Redeemer of the world was anxious to restore man to his former dignity, and to raise him as much by grace, as he had fallen by sin; and as his fall was from the life of God to that of beasts, so he desired to elevate him from that of beasts into which he had sunk, to the life of God which he had forfeited. For this end did he ordain the communion of this divine sacrament as a means by which man might be made a participator of God and live a godly life, as he himself expresses it

John vi.

in those exalted words; “He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him, as the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me.” Therefore this is the greatest of all the sacraments, in which God is bodily received; not that he may be changed into man, but that man may be changed into him by love and the conformity

of the will. For this divine food works in him who receiveth worthily that which is worked and symbolized in it when it is consecrated. For as by virtue of the words of consecration, that which was bread is changed into the substance of Christ, so by virtue of this holy communion, that which was man becomes in a miraculous manner transformed spiritually into God. So that as that sacred bread is one thing, and appears to be another, and is one before consecration, and another after; so he that eateth of it is one thing before communion, and another after: and appears outwardly to be one thing, but is a much more exalted and excellent thing inwardly, since one state is the state of man, the other that of the spirit of God. What glory then can surpass this? What more bountiful gift? What greater benefit? What greater evidence of love? Be silent all ye works of nature, and be silent also all ye works of grace, for this is beyond all other works and surpasses all other graces.

21.—Oh most wonderful sacrament! What shall I say of thee? In what words shall I praise thee? Thou art the life of our souls, the balsam of our wounds, our comfort in troubles, a memorial of Christ Jesus, a testimony of his love, the most precious legacy in his will, the companion of our wanderings, the joy of our exile, the fuel to kindle the fire of divine love, the medium of grace, the pledge of happiness and treasure of a christian life. By this food the soul is united to her Spouse, by this is the understanding enlightened, the memory awakened, the will warmed with love, the interior taste delighted, devotion invigorated, the inner man thawed, the fountains of tears opened, the passions calmed, good desires aroused, our weakness supported and breath supplied to enable us to ascend the mountain of God. What tongue can adequately describe the virtues of this sacrament? Who can shew sufficient gratitude for so great a benefit? Who can avoid melting into tears at seeing his God so closely united to him? Words fail and the understanding gives way at the contemplation of this sublime mystery.

22.—Then what delight, what sweetness, what a fragrant breath of life pervade the soul of the just at the time of receiving. No sound is heard save the sweet canticles of the interior man, the longings of desire, thanksgivings and tender praises of the beloved. Because here the devout soul, by virtue of this venerable sacrament is interiorly entirely renovated, is full of joy, refreshed with devotion, maintained in peace, fortified in faith, confirmed in hope, and bound with the chains of love to her most sweet Redeemer. Hence she becomes daily more fervent in love, stronger against temptation, more ready to bear labours, more anxious to work well and more desirous of frequenting this sacred mystery.

23.—Such are thy gifts, Oh good Jesus! such the fruits and delights of thy love, which thou bestowest upon thy friends in this divine sacrament in order by these great and overpowering pleasures to make them despise all vain and deceitful enjoyments. Open then now Oh mellifluous love! Open Oh divine light the interior eyes of thy faithful servants, that by the rays of faith they may know thee, and open their hearts to receive thee, that instructed by thee, they may seek thee for thyself and dwell within thee, and in the end through the medium of this sacrament may be as members united with thee as their head, like the vine shoots with their vine, that they may thus live by thy strength and enjoy the influence of thy grace for ever and ever. Amen.

24.—At the conclusion of the meditation, make an act of thanksgiving and a petition, as mentioned before in the second chapter.

CHAPTER XXI.

MEDITATION ON THE PRAYER IN THE GARDEN AND THE APPREHENSION OF OUR SAVIOUR; FOR TUESDAY MORNING.

Having made the sign of the cross with the preparation mentioned in the second chapter, the subjects for meditation will be the prayer in the garden and the apprehension of our Saviour.

§ 1.—*The text of the Evangelists is as follows.*

1.—“And after the supper was finished, Jesus went with
 Matt. xvi. his disciples to the garden of Gethsemani,
 Mar. xiv. and said to them; sit you here, till I go
 Luke xxi. yonder and pray. And taking with him
 John xviii. Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began
 to grow sorrowful and to be sad. Then he saith to them :
 My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay you here, and
 watch with me. And going a little further, he fell upon his
 face, praying, and saying; My Father, if it be possible, let
 this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but
 as thou wilt. And he cometh to his disciples, and findeth
 them asleep, and he saith to Peter; what? could you not
 watch one hour with me? Watch ye, and pray that ye enter
 not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the
 flesh weak. Again the second time he went, and prayed,
 saying; My Father, if this chalice may not pass away but I
 must drink it, thy will be done. And he cometh again, and
 findeth them sleeping; for their eyes were heavy. And leaving
 them, he went again; and he prayed the third time, saying
 the self-same words.” “And there appeared to him an angel
 from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he
 prayed the longer. And his sweat became drops of blood,
 trickling down upon the ground.” “Then he cometh to his
 disciples, and saith to them: sleep ye now and take your rest;
 behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man shall be
 betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise let us go: behold
 he is at hand that will betray me. As he yet spoke, behold
 Judas one of the twelve came, and with him a great multi-
 tude with swords and clubs, sent from the Chief Priests
 and the Ancients of the people. And he that betrayed him,
 gave them a sign, saying: Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is
 he, hold him fast. And forthwith coming to Jesus, he said:
 Hail Rabbi, and he kissed him. And Jesus said to him:
 Friend, whereto art thou come.” “Then Simon Peter having

a sword, drew it; and struck the servant of the High Priest and cut off his right ear. And the name of the servant was

John xviii.

Malchus. Jesus therefore said to Peter; put up thy sword into the scabbard. The chalice which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" "And when he had touched his ear he healed him. And Jesus said to the Chief Priests and Magistrates of the temple, and the Ancients that were come unto him; are you come out, as it

Luke xxii.

were against a thief, with swords and clubs? when I was daily with you in the temple, you did not stretch forth your hands against me; but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." "Then the band, and the tribune, and the servants of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him: and they led him away to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiphas, who was the High Priest of that year." "Then

John xviii.

all his disciples left Jesus and fled."

§ 2.—*Meditation on the above passages.*

2.—What art thou doing, Oh my soul? On what art thou thinking? This is not the hour for sleep. Come with me to the garden of Gethsemani and there thou shalt hear and see great mysteries. There thou shalt see how joy is turned into sorrow, how strength is filled with fear, how courage is melting away, majesty is abashed, greatness subdued and glory clouded and obscured.

3.—Consider then first how after that mysterious supper, our Lord went with his disciples to Mount Olivet to pray, before he entered upon the struggle of his passion, to teach us how under all our sufferings and all the temptations of this life, we should always have recourse to prayer, as a sacred anchor, by the aid of which our burthen of sorrow will be lightened or we shall obtain strength to carry it which is a

Lib. xxiii. Moral.

different and greater favour. "Because,"

ch. xxvii. & xxviii.

as St. Gregory says, "our Lord confers a

greater favour upon us when he gives us strength to bear our sufferings than when he entirely takes away even greater sufferings."

4.—He took with him as companions his three most beloved disciples, Peter and James and John, who a short time before had been witnesses of his glorious transfiguration, that they might see the different figure his love for man induced him to assume, from what they had beheld in that vision of glory. And to give them to understand that the interior sufferings of his soul were not less grievous than those which he outwardly began to shew, he addressed them in these sorrowful words; "My soul is sorrowful unto death, stay here and watch with me." That God and true man, that man exalted above our humanity and above all creation, whose communings were with the Almighty and whose secrets were entrusted to the breast of the Deity, is now so overpowered with sorrow as to descend to make his creatures partakers in his sufferings and to beg them to give him their companionship, saying; Wait for me here, and watch with me. Oh heavenly bounty! Oh happiness accomplished! Who placed thee Oh Lord in these straits? Who cast thee out as a stranger from their gates? Who made thee a suppliant to thy own creatures, but thy love and desire to enrich them?

5.—Say, Oh most sweet Redeemer, why fearest thou death which thou didst so anxiously desire, because the fulfilment of a desire is more a subject for joy than fear? The martyrs had neither strength nor grace except the little which was communicated to them from thee, the fountain of grace, and yet upheld by that they marched cheerfully to the victories of martyrdom. And dost thou the giver of strength and grace fear, and art thou troubled before the battle? Truly, Oh Lord, this thy fear is not thine, but mine; as that fortitude of the martyrs was not theirs, but thine. Thy fear is derived from us, and their strength was derived from thee. The fee-

bleness of my humanity is shewn in the fears of God, and the power of thy divinity is shewn in the fortitude of man. Thus is this fear mine, and this fortitude thine, this ignominy mine, and thine my praise.

6.—A rib was taken out of the side of the first Adam to
Gen. ii. form a woman, and in place of the bone
 flesh was substituted. What then is this, but that out of thee
 our second Adam, the Eternal Father took the strength of
 grace, to infuse it into thy Spouse the Church and took from
Ephes. v. her the weakness of the flesh to plant it in
 thee? Therefore was the woman made strong and thou made
 weak; the woman strong with thy strength, and thou weak
 with her weakness. This, Oh Father, was a double favour
 conferred upon us, not only didst thou clothe us with thyself
 but thou didst deign to clothe thyself with us. May the
 angels ever bless thee for both, since thou hast not been
 sparing in bestowing thy good things upon us, nor chary in
 bearing our evils. What then ought I to do, when I consider
 this? ought I not when I behold myself full of thy mercies to
 glorify myself in thee, and when I see thee full of my miseries
 to melt with compassion for thee? For the one I will exult
 and for the other I will mourn: and thus with mingled tears
 of joy and sorrow I will rejoice and lament over the mystery
 of thy passion, and will ever study in that book of Ezekiel
Ezek. ii. both the canticles and lamentations.

7.—When he had said this, our Saviour went away from
 his disciples about a stone's throw, and falling prostrate on
 the ground with the most profound reverence commenced
Luke xxii. praying, and said: "Father if it be possible,
 let this chalice pass from me; but still not my will but thine
 be done." And having prayed thus three times, he was filled
 with such agony that his sweat fell in drops of blood and
 trickled down his most sacred body, even to the ground.

8.—Behold then thy Lord, at this most painful stage,
 and consider how at that moment all the torments he had to

suffer were present to his mind. He clearly saw all the cruel tortures prepared for his tender body. He beheld the sins of the whole world for which he was about to suffer, and the ingratitude of so many souls who would never acknowledge the blessing conferred upon them nor seek to avail themselves of this powerful and costly remedy. Thus was his soul filled with anguish, thus were his senses wrought upon that the strength and fibres of his human frame gave way, and bursting on every side a stream of blood oozed from his sacred flesh and trickled to the ground. If such were the agonies of the body acting from the rebound of the soul, Oh, what would be the agonies of the soul herself?

9.—Generally when some deep and sudden sorrow overwhelms us the blood will rush to the heart, leaving the other members cold and powerless, as it were to relieve the vital part; but with Jesus it was not so, as he desired to suffer without any sort of alleviation to render our redemption more abundant, he refused for the love of us this slight relief which nature proffers.

10.—See then thy Lord in this agony and consider not only the agonies of his soul but look also at the appearance of his sacred face. Man principally perspires from the forehead and face, if then the blood streamed down the whole body of Jesus even to the ground, what would be the aspect of that bright brow which gives light to light, of that face adored by heaven spotted and streaked with a sweat of blood? And if those who truly love are seen in the hour of sickness and midst the perils of death to hang with fond looks upon their dying friend, watching each changing hue and movement, what thinkest thou my soul, looking upon the face of Jesus, of all these strange and deadly symptoms? What will be the agonies to follow, since the beginning of the struggle is so terrible? What will be his feelings under the torments themselves, if only the contemplation of them can cause a sweat of blood?

11.—If at this stage thou feelest no compassion for thy Saviour, and when a bloody sweat oozes from all his body thou hast no tear to shed, depend upon it, thou hast a heart of stone. If thou hast no tears from lack of love, weep at least for thy manifold sins which were the cause of this suffering. It is not the executioners now that scourge, nor the soldiers that fix the crown, nor the nails and thorns that now cause the blood to flow, but thy sins. They are the thorns that prick, the executioners that torture, the heavy load that makes this sweat to flow. Oh, my Saviour how dear has my salvation cost thee! Oh thou true Adam, who
Gen. iii. didst leave paradise for my sins, with what a bloody sweat dost thou purchase the bread I have to eat!

12.—Consider also in this stage of the passion, on the one hand, the great agony and the watchings of Christ, and on the other the deep sleep of the disciples. Therein will be found figured a great mystery. For truly there is nothing more astonishing than to observe the carelessness in which men live, and the very slight account they make of their salvation. What more astounding than such neglect on so vital a subject? To understand both the one and the other, look at our Saviour and look at his disciples at this moment. See our Saviour intent on carrying out his object, overwhelmed with solicitude and in an agony that draws forth a sweat of blood: then look at the disciples, stretched on the ground buried in such a deep sleep, that neither the rebuke of their master, the hard bed on which they lay, the want of shelter nor the evening dew and cold of the night sufficed to rouse them. Yet look at the importance of man's salvation. It causes him who upholds the firmament to sweat drops of blood, but on the other hand, how little is it thought of by men, since they lie carelessly buried in sleep at the very moment that God himself is sleepless on their account. It is impossible to illustrate either, by any more striking example than this. Since then the miseries of others can thus afflict God himself,

how can he whose existence, whose all, whose profit and whose loss are all at stake, continue to live in such strange forgetfulness ?

13.—By this solicitude on the one hand and in this heedlessness on the other we can understand how true it is that the Lord is our Father and has for us the bowels and heart of a Father. How often happens it that whilst a daughter is buried in profound sleep, her wakeful father hangs over her the night long solicitous for her recovery? So is this our tender Father, whilst we are slumbering careless about our salvation, as shewn in this instance, on the anxious watch all night for our recovery, bathed in the agony of a bloody sweat.

§ 3.—*On our Saviour being made prisoner.*

14.—After his prayer was ended, contemplate the approach of his false friend accompanied by a crowd of miscreants. He had renounced his apostleship and become a spy and captain in the army of Satan. See with what effrontery he heads the crowd and advancing to his Master betrays him with a treacherous kiss of peace. It is a wretched affair for a man to be sold for money, but still worse to be sold by his friends to whom he has been a benefactor. Christ is sold by one whom he had chosen, not only as a disciple, but as an Apostle, he is sold with fraud and treachery to cruel dealers who only seek his blood and his life to satiate their vengeance. But for how much is he sold? The mean price adds insult to the injury. Tell me, Judas, for what sum didst thou sell the Lord of heaven? For thirty pieces of silver? Oh what a contemptible sum for so great a Lord! Not more than the price of a beast in the market; and for this thou sellest thy God? He did not hold thee so cheap, for he purchased thee with his blood. What a wide difference between the high price set upon man and the contemptible sum at which God is appraised! God is sold for thirty pieces of silver, and man is purchased with the blood of the same God.

15.—At that time Jesus said to those who came to take him, “Ye have come out as it were against a thief with swords and clubs, and when I was daily with you in the temple, you did not stretch forth your arms against me, but this is your hour and the power of darkness.” This is a wonderful mystery. What more awful than to see the Son of God in the likeness not only of a sinner but of a convict? This, he says, is your hour and the power of darkness. From these words we gather, that from that hour, this most innocent lamb was delivered over into the power of the princes of darkness, that is, of the devils, that by the hands of their followers and slaves they might inflict upon him every imagi-

Job i. and ii.

nable torture and cruelty. And as Holy Job was by divine permission delivered over into the power of Satan, to do unto whatever evil he wished, so however that he touched not his life, in the same manner was power given to the princes of darkness, without reserve of life or death, to vent all their rage and fury upon that sacred humanity. Hence arose all those trials, all those scoffs, all those unheard-of contumelies, with which the devil strove to satisfy his hate, to avenge his wrongs, and to drive that sacred soul, if it were possible, into some murmuring complaint. “And the

Zac. lii.

Lord shewed me,” saith the Prophet Zacharias, “Jesus the High Priest clothed with filthy garments standing before the Angel of the Lord; and Satan stood on his right hand, to be his adversary.” And Jesus answering

Psalms xv. 8.

said, “I set the Lord always in my sight: for he is at my right hand, that I be not moved.” Consider then to what a depth this Divine Majesty hath debased himself for thee, since he has descended to the greatest of all evils, in being delivered into the power of the ministers of the devil. And because the punishment due to thy sins merited this, he desired to undergo this punishment to free thee from it. Oh

Psalms viii.

holy prophet! Why art thou astonished at seeing God make himself less than the angels? Be much

more astonished now at seeing him delivered into the power of the ministers of hell. Heaven and earth will doubtless tremble at the sight of such great humility and charity.

16.—After these words, the troop of ravenous wolves rushed upon that meek lamb, tearing at him on every side with the bitterest malignity. Oh how brutally they abused him! What insults they showered upon him! What blows and buffets they gave him! With what yells and screams, like plunderers over their prey, did they salute him! They seize and bind those sacred hands, fresh from working such numberless miracles, with running cords so tight as to make the blood spurt and to tear away the skin from the arms. Thus bound they drag him through the public streets in the most ignominious manner. Oh marvellous spectacle! Think for a moment what thy feelings would be, at beholding some person of well-known merit and great authority, carried through the public streets, in the hands of justice, with a rope round his neck, his hands crossed and bound, accompanied by a noisy rabble and surrounded by a band of armed ruffians. Think what thy feelings would be under such circumstances, and then lift up thy eyes and behold the Lord omnipotent, who wrought such marvellous things in that land, who preached such sermons, whom the sick and the infirm looked upon with such reverence and from whom they sought relief from all their ailments. Behold how they carry him stripped of every vestige of authority, covered with disgrace stumbling and jostled about, shoved and pushed along regardless of his person and dignity, in such a way as to gratify the fury of his enemies and to satisfy the Pharisees who were hungering to get their prey within their clutches. Gaze upon him as he passes deserted by his disciples, accompanied by his enemies, with hurried steps, how wan and pale, how flushed and burning with the breathless hurry of his journey, and contemplate amidst all that personal abuse the modesty of that face, the serenity of those eyes, that Godly appearance which in the midst of every contumely could never lie concealed.

17.—Advance a step further, then stop to consider who he is thou seest carried off in such disgrace. He is the Word of the Father, the Eternal Wisdom, Infinite Virtue, Infinite Goodness, the Plenitude of Happiness, the True Glory and the bright Fountain of every Beauty. See how for thy salvation and redemption, virtue is here bound, innocence made captive, wisdom scoffed at, honour slandered, glory tormented and the bright fountain of beauty muddied with

II. Kings vi.

tears. If the High Priest Heli felt so grievously the capture of the Ark of the Covenant as to fall off his seat, break his neck and die upon the spot; what should be the feelings of the christian soul at seeing the Ark of all the treasures of the wisdom of God carried away captive in the power of such enemies? "Let the heavens and the earth praise the Lord, and all that is therein, because he hath

Psalms lxxviii.

heard the cry of the poor and he has not despised the groans of them that are in fetters, since he desired to be captive himself for their deliverance."

§ 4.—*On those who spiritually bind the hands of our Redeemer.*

18.—Then, Oh most clement and most sweet Saviour, who didst desire to be bound thyself in order to loosen our chains and to deliver us from our captivity, I beseech thee by the bowels of that mercy which prompted thee to this, not to suffer me to commit so great an offence as to bind thy hands as did the Jews. For they are not the only ones who have bound thy hands, but he also binds them who resists thy holy inspirations, who will not go where thou seekest to guide him and will not accept what thou in thy mercy seekest to give him.

19.—He also binds thy hands who scandalizes his neighbour, and turns him aside by evil example and counsel from his good resolutions, and hinders the good work thou hast begun upon for him.

20.—The distrustful also, Oh Lord, and the incredulous bind the hands of thy liberality and clemency; because as confidence opens the hands of thy grace, so do incredulity and distrust close them. In accordance with which the Evangelist says, that thou couldst not work many wonders in thy own
Matt. xiii. country because of the incredulity of thy neighbours and of the dwellers therein.

21.—The ungrateful also and the negligent bind thy hands and stop the current of thy grace, the former by omitting to thank thee for it, and the latter because they allow it to remain idle and waste without wishing to profit by it.

22.—Lastly those who are vain of the graces conferred by thee upon them, also tightly bind thy hands, as by their own fault they make themselves unworthy of thy grace. It is not in reason that thou shouldst continue to shower thy favours upon such as make use of them to foster their vanity, or that thou shouldst bestow the riches of thy graces upon such as do not hasten to give thee thy tribute of glory, but like treacherous thieves exalt themselves and claim that glory which belongs to thee alone.

23.—Also I should say, Oh Lord, that those who prate and make little secret of the consolations and sentiments which thou givest them, bind thy hands; because as prudent and discreet persons make not confidants of those whom they find unable to keep a secret, so thou ceaseest to make confidants in thy secrets of those who publish them to others and take occasion from them to make themselves vain.

24.—At the end of the meditation, make a thanksgiving and petition as before mentioned in the second chapter.

CHAPTER XXII.

MEDITATION ON THE BEHAVIOUR OF OUR REDEEMER WHEN TAKEN BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST AND JUDGES, AND ON THE SCOURGING AT THE PILLAR; FOR WEDNESDAY MORNING.

Having made the sign of the cross with the preparation mentioned in the second chapter, take for the subjects of thy

meditation the arraignment of our Lord before the Priests and the Judges, first before Annas, secondly before Caiphas, thirdly before Herod, fourthly before Pilate, and afterwards the scourging at the pillar.

§ 1.—*The following is taken from the text of the Evangelists.*

1.—“When our Lord was brought before Annas who was father-in-law to Caiphas the High Priest of that same
 Matt. xxvi. year, the High Priest asked him of his
 Mark xiv. disciples and of his doctrines. Jesus
 Luke xxii. answered him : I have spoken openly to the
 John xviii. world ; I have always taught in the syna-
 gogue, and in the temple where all the Jews resort ; and in
 secret I have spoken nothing, why askest thou me ? Ask
 them who have heard what I have spoken unto them, behold
 they know what things I have said. And when he had said
 these things, one of the officers standing by gave Jesus a
 blow saying ; Answerest thou the High Priest so ? Jesus
 answered him ; if I have spoken evil, give testimony of the
 evil ; but if well, why strikest thou me ?”

2.—“Now Annas had sent him bound to Caiphas the High Priest where the Scribes and the Ancients were assembled.
 Matt. xxvi. And the Chief Priests and the whole council
 sought false witness against Jesus, that they might put him to
 death ; and they found not, whereas many false witnesses had
 come in. And last of all there came two false witnesses ; and
 they said : This man said I am able to destroy the temple of
 God, and after three days to rebuild it. And the High
 Priest rising up said to him ; Answerest thou nothing
 to the things which these witness against thee ? But
 Jesus held his peace. And the High Priest said to him :
 I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us if
 thou be the Christ the Son of God. Jesus saith to
 him ; Thou hast said it. Nevertheless I say to you,
 hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right
 hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Then the High Priest rent his garments, saying ; He hath blasphemed, what further need have we of witnesses ? Behold now you have heard the blasphemy, what think you ? But they answering said ; He is guilty of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffet him, and others struck his face with the palms of their hands, saying ; Prophecy unto us, Oh Christ, who is he that struck thee ?”

3.—“And the following morning the whole multitude of
Luke xxiii. them rising up, led him to Pilate. And they began to accuse him saying, We have found this man perverting our nation and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that he is Christ the King. And Pilate asked him, saying : Art thou the King of the Jews ? But he answering,
Mark xv. said ; thou sayest it.” And the Chief Priests accused him in many things, but he answered nothing. Then Pilate said, Answerest thou nothing ? behold in how many things they accuse thee. But Jesus still answered nothing, so
Luke xxiii. that Pilate wondered. “And he then said

to the Chief Priests and to the multitudes ; I find no cause in this man. But they were more earnest, saying ; He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place. But Pilate hearing Galilee, asked if the man were of Galilee ; and when he understood that he was of Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him away to Herod, who was also himself at Jerusalem in those days. And Herod seeing Jesus was very glad, for he was desirous of a long time to see him, because he had heard many things of him ; and he hoped to see some sign wrought by him. And he questioned him in many words. But he answered him nothing. And the Chief Priests and the Scribes stood by, earnestly accusing him. And Herod with his army set him at nought, and mocked him, putting on him a white garment, and sent him back to Pilate.”

4.—“And on the festival day he was wont to release un-
Mark xv. to them one of the prisoners whomsoever they should ask. And there was at that time in prison a

notorious malefactor, named Barabbas. Then setting them side by side Pilate said to the people, which of these two shall I release unto you ? Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ ? And they answering said, not Him but Barabbas, who was in prison for a tumult in the city, in which he had killed a man. Pilate then said to them. What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ ? They all cried out, Crucify him. Pilate then took Jesus and scourged him."

§ 2.—*Meditation on the foregoing texts.*

5.—My soul, thou hast many things here to contemplate to-day ; thou hast many stations to go to in company with thy Saviour, unless thou wishest to fly with the disciples, or thy feet are too weary to follow thy Saviour on the way he took for thee. Five times this day is he taken before different judges, and on each occasion is he maltreated on account of thee, on each he suffers thy deserts ; on one is he buffeted, on another spit upon, on another scoffed at, crowned with thorns and condemned. Are not these stations enough to break the heart and to be traversed with bare and bleeding feet ?

6.—Let us go first to the house of Annas, and there see how our Lord when courteously replying to a question of the High Priest as to his disciples and his doctrine, is struck on his divine face, by one of those evil by-standers, who said ; 'Is it thus thou answerest the High Priest ?' To which our Saviour answered meekly ; 'If I have spoken ill, shew me in what ? but if well, why dost thou strike me ?' See here, my soul, not only the meekness of the answer, but look also at that heavenly face marked and discoloured with the blow, at the meekness of those serene eyes, at that unruffled brow ; and at that most holy spirit filled with interior humility and ready to turn the other cheek, if asked by the executioner. Oh unlucky hand, that thus wast raised against that face, before which the heavens bend prostrate, before whose majesty the Seraphim and all nature tremble ! What didst

thou see in him thus to blot the image of the Glory of the Father, thus to disfigure and affront the most beautiful of the Sons of men ?

7.—But this will not be the last of the injuries of that night, because thence they drag him to the house of the High Priest Caiphas. Thither thou must accompany him, and there thou wilt see the Sun of justice eclipsed, and that divine face on which angels love to gaze, spit upon ; because on our Saviour being conjured in the name of his Father to say who he was, answered the question in the way that suited those so utterly unworthy to hear so exalted a reply, blinding themselves with the brilliance of so great a light, they turned upon him like rabid hounds and vented upon him all their rage and anger. There did they all shower upon him blows and buffets, there did those infernal mouths spit on his divine cheeks, there did they blindfold him and striking him on the face, mock him saying ; ‘Prophecy unto us, who it was that struck thee.’ Oh wonderful humility and patience of the Son of God ! Oh angelic beauty ! Was thine the face to be spit upon ? When men are about to spit, they usually turn their faces towards the foulest corner of the room, and in this palace, was there no meaner spot to be found to be fouled with spittle than thy face ? How comes it, Oh dust and ashes ! with this example, that thou dost not humble thyself ? How is there still left in the world one trace of pride, after this great example of humility ? God is silent when spit upon and struck in the face ; the angels and all created things stand paralyzed at seeing their Creator thus insulted ; and shall a vile worm turn the world upside down upon a point of honour ? Why, Oh man ! art thou astounded at beholding God thus trampled on and ill-treated by the world ? Did he not descend into the world to cure the pride of the world ? If the severity of the treatment shock thee, look at the depth of the wound and thou wilt find the wound required the treatment, since withal it is not yet healed. Be shocked at the sight of God humili-

ated; I am shocked, rather at the sight of thee still so proud, and of God so humble. Be shocked at the sight of God brought down to the dust; but I am shocked at the sight of dust and clay after all this, exalting themselves above heaven and seeking to be more honoured than God.

8.—How then happens it that this wonderful example is not enough to overcome the pride of the world? Was Christ's humility sufficient to conquer and melt the heart of God, and yet insufficient to conquer thine and soften it? The Angel said to the Patriarch Jacob; 'Thou shalt not henceforth be called Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name, for if thou wast powerful against God, how much more so wilt thou be against men?' If then the humility and meekness of Christ prevailed against the divine wrath and indignation, how comes it they do not prevail against our pride? If they soothed and softened a strong heart like that of an angry God, how is it they do not change and humble the hearts of men? I wonder, nay I am filled with astonishment to see how with all this patience thy anger remains unsubdued, with all this abasement thy pride unconquered, with all these buffetings thy presumption ever rampant; with this profound silence under such injuries, to see thee involved in litigation about a frivolous trifle. It is wonderful to contemplate the Almighty, by the instrumentality of such terrible injuries striving to overthrow the empire of our pride, but more wonderful to find after all, the memory
 I. Kings xv. of Amalec still surviving under heaven and a remnant left of this vile generation.

9.—Vouchsafe then, Oh good Jesus, by the example of thy humility to cure in me the madness of my pride, and as the severity of thy wounds shows clearly my need of a physician let me learn by thy curing art that I now possess him.

§ 3.—*On the sufferings of our Saviour during the night of his passion, and on the denial of Peter.*

10.—Consider next the sufferings of our Saviour during that sorrowful night, because the guard of soldiers, according

Luke xlii. to St. Luke, mocked him, and in order to keep themselves awake, past the time in ridiculing and scoffing at the Lord of Majesty. See then, my soul, how thy beloved Spouse is set as a target for all their blows and buffets! Oh cruel night! Oh restless night, during which, Oh sweet Jesus, thou didst not sleep, nor did those sleep who amused themselves by tormenting thee! Night was ordained as a time of rest for all creatures, that the wearied senses and limbs might repose after the fatigues of the day. And this time have the wicked chosen to torture all thy members and senses, wounding thy body, afflicting thy soul, binding thy hands, buffeting thy cheeks, spitting in thy face and torturing thy ears, in order that during all the time the senses are wont to take repose, thine may be filled with pain and suffering. How different these matins from those chaunted in thy honour at that same hour in heaven by all the choirs of angels! There they sing, Holy, Holy; here they cry out, To death, to death, crucify him, crucify him. Oh angels of paradise, ye hear both voices, what feel ye at beholding such treatment upon earth of him whom ye worship with such reverence in heaven? What feel ye, at beholding God enduring such sufferings for the very men who inflict them? Oh unheard-of charity, to suffer death, to free from death him who inflicts death! Human malice can go no further than to lay hands on God himself, nor can God's goodness and mercy extend beyond this desire to suffer death for the creature who inflicts it.

11.—The denial of Peter was added to the rest to increase the sufferings of that sorrowful night. That familiar friend, chosen to witness the glory of the Transfiguration, honoured above all as the head of the Church, he, the first of all, not once, but three times in the presence of our Saviour himself, swore and foreswore himself that he knew him not, nor who he was. Oh Peter! Is he then who stands here so bad, that thou art ashamed even to have known him? See, thou art

the first to condemn, even before the priests, because thou givest out, that he is such a character, that the knowing him would make thee despise thyself and would disgrace thee. Canst thou inflict a greater injury than this?

12.—Our Saviour then turned and looked at Peter, his eyes sought the lost sheep. Oh look of inestimable power! Oh silent look, yet wonderfully significant! Peter well understood the language of that look, since the crow of the cock aroused him not, but that look did. But the eyes of Christ not only speak but also work, and this is shewn by Peter's tears, which flowed not so much from Peter's eyes as from the eyes of Christ.

13.—Thus, shouldst thou at any time be aroused to look into thy own interior, know that this blessing flows from the eyes of Christ which are looking on thee. The cock had crowed, and Peter was not reminded because our Saviour had not yet looked upon him. He looked upon him, and Peter remembered and repented and wept for his sin, because the eyes of Christ open our eyes, and are those that awaken the eyes of the sleeping.

14.—Whereupon, says the Evangelist, Peter went out and wept bitterly, to shew that it is not sufficient to weep for our sins, but it is also necessary to flee from the place and avoid all occasions of sin. For always to bewail thy sins, and always again to fall into sin, is to challenge against thyself the wrath of the Lord.

15.—And bear in mind that Peter's chief fault was shamefacedness and fear to be known as a disciple of Christ, and this is called denying him. Then if this be denying Christ, how many christians are there who deny him in the same manner? How many are there who refuse to confess and communicate, to pray and converse with God, and to associate with the good, and to suffer injuries, for fear the world should despise and laugh at them? For what else is this but being ashamed to appear a disciple of Christ and an observer

of his commandments? And what is this but denying Christ like St. Peter, who felt ashamed to appear as his disciple? What then can such as do this expect, except that punishment and sentence of our Saviour, who says; "He who shall be ashamed to appear my disciple before men, the Son of Man shall be ashamed to acknowledge him as his when he shall come in his Majesty and before his Father and all his holy angels?"

16.—After this night of sorrow was past, they take our Saviour to the house of Pilate the governor; and he because he knew that he was a native of Galilee, sent him to Herod who

John xviii. was king of that country, who took him for

Luke xxiii. a fool, and as such ordered him to be clothed in a white garment, and so sent him back to Pilate. Thus it appears that our Saviour was in this world not only treated as a malefactor but as a fool. Oh mystery worthy of our highest veneration! The chief virtue of a christian is to make no account of the judgment and opinion of the world. Here then, brother, thou canst study well this philosophy, and comfort thyself with this example whenever thou art despised by the world. For the world can do thee no injustice nor testify anything against thee which it has not testified against Christ. He was held to be a malefactor and a stirrer of sedi-

Matt. xii. tion amongst the people, and for this was

James ii. he accused before the Judges, for this was his death demanded. He was held to be a Magician and possessed by a devil, and thus they said that by the power of Beelzebub he cast out devils. He was held a glutton and a

James ix. guzzler; thus, they said: see here is a glutton

Luke xv. and a drinker of wine. He was held to be a man who went about with reprobate associates, and thus they said of him, that he received publicans and sinners and ate with them. He was charged with being born of a mean

John viii. and degenerate caste, and they said: 'Thou

Mark ii. art a Samaritan and hast a devil.' He was

called an unbeliever and a blasphemer ; and thus they said, he made himself out to be God and forgave sins as God. After all this it only remained to call him a fool, and such was he here considered, not by the ignorant vulgar, but by the nobles and courtiers of King Herod. So they dressed him as a fool, in a fool's dress. Oh wonderful humility ! Oh model of every virtue ! Oh comfort in tribulation ! Since in order that thou mayst make slight account of the judgment and opinion of the world, and mayst see how foolish it is, and how mistaken in its sayings and doings, and in its notions and ideas, look on this pattern of all virtues and this comfort under all tribulations ; and see how here, the wisdom of God is reckoned foolishness, virtue is esteemed wickedness, truth considered error, temperance gluttony, the peacemaker of the world is taken for a revolutionist, the reformer of the law for a breaker of the law, and the justifier of sinners for a sinner and the companion of evil doers.

17.—In all these comings and goings, and in all these interrogatories and answers before the Judges, observe attentively the meekness of our Saviour, the serenity of his countenance, the self-possession of his mind never overcome nor shaken in all these encounters. Such were his wonderful constancy, patience and calmness, that before his judges and every tribunal, in the midst of insults and blows, amidst the shouts and clamour of his accusers yelling for his death, amidst the rage and fury of his enemies, with certain death and the cross before his eyes, in all this storm and tumult he did nothing and said nothing but what did honour to a great and generous heart. No harsh or bitter words escaped his lips, he did not descend to entreaties or supplications or tears, but in all and through all he preserved that meekness which became the dignity of one so exalted. What silence under such grave and false accusations ! When he spoke, what consideration in his words ! What prudence in his answers ! Lastly, such was the appearance both of his countenance and of his courage

shewn in every stage of these transactions, that it alone without further testimony, should have sufficed to justify his cause, if the lowness of those base and grovelling intellects could have appreciated the force of that proof.

§ 4.—*On the scourging at the pillar.*

18.—Consider next after all these injuries the scourging our Saviour suffered at the pillar. For the Judge seeing that he could not pacify the fury of these savage enemies, resolved to inflict a severe chastisement, in order thus to satisfy the
John xix. rage of those cruel hearts and to silence the clamour for his death.

19.—This is one of the grandest and most sublime spectacles ever exhibited before the world. Who ever thought that stripes could fall on the shoulders of God? David says :
Psaln xc. “Thou hast made the Most High thy refuge, there shall no evil come to thee; nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling.” What is more beneath the loftiness and glory of God than ignominious scourges and stripes? It is the punishment of slaves and thieves, and so disgraceful a punishment that no Roman citizen, whatever his crime, could be degraded by its infliction. Nevertheless, how comes it now, that the Lord of heaven, the Creator of the universe, the Glory of the angels, the Wisdom the Power and the Glory of the living God should be chastised with stripes? Truly, I believe all the choirs of angels would stand astonished and terror-stricken, and witnessing such a wonder would fall down in adoration and gratitude for the immensity of the Divine bounty. For if they filled the air with songs of praise on the day of his nativity, when they had only seen the swaddling
Luke ii. clothes and the manger, what would they do on beholding the scourging and the pillar? Then, my soul, how much more oughtest thou to feel and be grateful, who art so much more interested than the angels?

20.—Enter now in spirit into the Pretorium of Pilate, and take with thee thy tears for thou hast need to shed them

for what thou wilt there see and hear. Look how those vile and cruel executioners inhumanly strip our Saviour of his garments, and how he humbly submits to be stript without opening his mouth or answering a word to all their insults. Look how they bind his sacred body to the pillar, that they may distribute their blows as and where they wish. Look how the Lord of heaven stands there alone in the midst of his cruel executioners, with no second or friend to support him, and without a pitying eye to shed the tear of sympathy. Look how they begin with furious cruelty to discharge their stripes and lashes upon that most tender flesh, how they shower upon him stripes upon stripes, scourges upon scourges, wounds upon wounds. There then wouldst thou see that most sacred body flayed into one mass of wounds, and streams of blood flowing on every side from its lacerated flesh.

21.—But beyond all what would it be to see that deep gash gaping wide between his sacred shoulders where nearly every blow descended. Truly, soon it would have been wide and deep enough to bare the white bone between the discoloured flesh, and end that sacred life at the pillar instead of on the cross. Lastly they cut and hacked that most beautiful body with such ferocity and so heavily and incessantly launched their blows and lacerated the wounds, as almost to blot out the likeness of man. Behold then, my soul, that most lovely and modest form there standing abused pilloried and exposed in nakedness. See how that tender beautiful flesh, the flower of all flesh, there stands striped and gashed on every side.

22.—The law of Moses commanded malefactors to be scourged, but limited the number of stripes according to the nature of the crime, but they were never to exceed forty,

Deut.

“That thy brother fall not down before thee foully wounded, saith the law.” It appeared to the lawgiver that to exceed that number was so severe a chastisement as to be contrary to the laws of humanity. But against thee, Oh good Jesus, who didst never offend against the law of justice,

they broke every law of mercy and to such an extent, that instead of forty they inflicted upon thee, as many holy doctors inform us, five thousand stripes. Since then a body would be so foully treated by being subjected to more than forty stripes, what would thine be, my most sweet Lord and Father after being subjected to five thousand? Oh delight of the angels, and glory of the blessed! Who has thus disfigured thee? Who has fouled with so many blots the mirror of innocence? Oh Lord, not thy sins, but mine, not thy offences, but mine have been the cause of this ill-treatment. Love and compassion induced thee to undergo this heavy burthen. Thy love induced thee to bestow upon me all thy blessings, and thy compassion to take upon thee all my miseries. Since then thy love and compassion have brought upon thee such frightful calamities, who can henceforth doubt thy love? If the strongest test of love be suffering for the beloved, what is each of thy sufferings but a pledge of thy love? What each wound, but a heavenly mouth preaching love and demanding my love in return? And if the pledges be numbered by the blows, who can henceforth doubt the proofs established by so many witnesses? How incomprehensible then is my incredulity, which still remains unconvinced after such signal arguments? The Evangelist St. John was amazed at the incredulity of the Jews, saying, 'That after our Lord had wrought such great signs amongst them they refused to believe in him.' Oh holy Evangelist! cease to wonder at their incredulity, but stand amazed at mine. Because the enduring so many sufferings to make me believe in the love of Jesus is as strong an argument as the working of miracles to make them believe in Christ. If then it be so wonderful after so many miracles, to find such incredulity, how much more wonderful is it, after five thousand stripes suffered for us, that we should still doubt his love?

23.—What, if we add to the scourging at the pillar, all the other pains and sufferings of his life, all of which were

John i. and ii. undergone from love? What made thee, Oh
 Matt. ii. Lord, descend from heaven but love? what
 Luke ii. brought thee from the bosom of the Father
 to the breast of the Mother but love? what but love clothed
 thee with our mortal clay and made thee the participator in
 all our miseries? What placed thee in the stable, what laid
 thee in a manger, what drove thee into a foreign land but
 love? What but love caused thee for so many years to bear
 the yoke of our mortality? What caused thee to toil and
 travel and watch, to traverse sea and land in search of souls
 Judges xvi. but love? What bound Sampson hand and
 foot, sheared his locks and spoiled him of his strength?
 What made him the scorn of his enemies, but the love of his
 wife Delilah? And Oh, our true Sampson, what but the love
 of thy Spouse the Church and of each of our souls, bound and
 sheared thee and despoiled thee of thy power and strength
 Matt. xxvii. and delivered thee into the hands of thy
 Mark xv. enemies to be scorned and spit upon and
 Luke xxviii. derided? Finally, what attracted thee to
 the wood of the cross? stretched thee upon it lacerated with
 wounds from head to foot, thy hands pierced with nails,
 stabbed in thy side, all thy limbs dislocated, thy body covered
 with blood, thy veins drained of every drop, thy tongue parched
 with a bitter thirst, and thy whole frame slashed and torn to
 pieces? What but love could cause destruction like this? Oh
 unbounded charming love! Oh love unfathomable and worthy
 of the immensity of him who is infinitely good and lovely and
 is himself all love!

. 24.—Then with so many and such powerful witnesses as
 these, how can I doubt thy love, since it is certain thou hast
 not changed in heaven the heart thou hadst here on earth?

Gen. xl. Thou art not like Pharaoh's cupbearer,
 who in his prosperity forgot the humble friends he had left in
 prison: but on the contrary the prosperity and glory thou now
 enjoyest in heaven only increase thy compassion for thy chil-

dren left here on earth. Since then it is certain thou lovest me so much, why do not I love thee? Why do not I put my trust in thee? Why do not I hope in thee? Why do not I esteem myself rich and wealthy in having God himself for such a friend? It is truly wonderful that I should care for any of the things of this life, since I have my portion in so rich and powerful a lover through whose hands all things pass.

25.—Having finished the meditation, make an act of thanksgiving and petition, as before mentioned in the second chapter.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MEDITATION ON THE CROWN OF THORNS WORN BY THE SON OF GOD, ON THE *Ecce Homo*, AND ON THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS ; FOR THURSDAY MORNING.

§ 1.—*The text of the Evangelists is as follows.*

1.—“Then the soldiers of the governor taking Jesus into
Matt. xxvii. the hall, gathered together the whole band ;
and other Evang. and stripping him they put a scarlet cloak about him. And plating a crown of thorns they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand. And bowing the knee before him, they mocked him, saying ; Hail, King of the Jews ; and spitting upon him they took the reed and struck his head.”

2.—“Pilate therefore went forth again and said to them :
John. Behold I bring him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in him. Jesus therefore came forth bearing the crown of thorns, and the purple garment, and Pilate saith to them. *Ecce Homo*, behold the man. When the Chief Priests therefore and the servants had seen him, they cried out, saying, ‘Crucify him, Crucify him.’ Pilate saith to them, ‘Take him you and crucify him ; for I find no cause in him.’ The Jews answered him ; ‘we have a law ; and according to that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.’ When Pilate therefore had heard

this saying he feared the more. And he entered into the hall again and he said to Jesus. Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore saith to him; Speakest thou not to me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee? Jesus answered; 'Thou shouldst not have any power against me, unless it were given thee from above. Therefore he that hath delivered me to thee, hath the greater sin.' And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him." "But they were instant with

Luke xxiii.

loud voices requiring that he might be crucified; and their voices prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required; and he released unto them him who for murder and sedition had been cast into prison whom they had desired; but Jesus he delivered up to their will."

3.—"And they took Jesus and led him forth, and bearing his own cross he went forth to that place which is called Calvary." "And there followed him a great multitude of people and of women, who bewailed and lamented him." But Jesus turning to them said; 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold the days shall come, wherein they will say; Blessed are the barren and the wombs that have not borne, and the paps that have not given suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains; Fall upon us; and to the hills cover us, for if in the green wood they do these things, what shall be done in the dry?'

§ 2.—*Meditation on the above text.*

4.—"Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see King
Cant. iii.

Solomon with a diadem wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the joy of his heart." Oh my soul! what art thou doing? My heart! on what art thou thinking? My tongue! why art thou mute? How is it, Oh my heart! thou dost not break? How comes it, thy hardness is not softened? What

eyes can refrain from weeping, at the sight of such a figure before them? Oh most sweet Saviour! when I behold this dismal picture now set before me, how is it my heart does not burst with anguish? I see that most adorable head before which the powers of heaven tremble, pierced with cruel thorns: that divine face, smeared with spittle and marked with bruises, the bright intelligence of that noble brow shadowed and dimmed, and those meek eyes blinded with rivers of blood. I see streams of blood trickling from that head, coursing those cheeks and blotting out the beauty of that heavenly countenance. Were not then, Oh Lord, those stripes enough? impending death, and all the blood thus shed, sufficient? but that the thorns must yet be sought to draw blood from the head the scourge and stripes had spared? If for the affronts and buffets, I have inflicted upon thee by my sins, thou hast to undergo insults and blows in return, hast not thou during the past night, amply repaid them? If thy death alone were sufficient for our redemption, why dost thou endure so much beyond? Why every sort of contumely? Who ever heard or read of such a crown, of such a combination of torments? Whence did this new invention flash upon the world, contrived to combine infamy and torture? Were not the torments hitherto in vogue for ages sufficient without inventing fresh ones for thy passion? I see full well, Oh my Lord! that all these sufferings were not necessary for my cure. A single drop of thy blood would have sufficed for that. But they were admirably adapted to point out the greatness of thy love, to bind me with the chains of eternal gratitude, to confound the wandering extravagances of my vanity, and to teach me contempt for the glories of the world.

5.—To induce thee then, Oh my soul, to sympathize in some degree in this sorrowful stage of thy Saviour's passion, place first before thy eyes the former likeness of thy Lord and the excellence of all his virtues; and then contemplate him as

he now stands before thee. Behold his marvellous beauty, the modesty of his looks, the softness of his words, his authority, his meekness, his serenity and that countenance commanding universal veneration. Look at his condescension towards his disciples, his affability towards his enemies, his noble bearing before the haughty, his sweet behaviour amongst his friends, and his compassionate sympathy for all. Consider how patient he was under every suffering, how wise in all his answers, how merciful to all in the unbounded exercise of his forgiveness.

6.—And after thus regarding him and delighting thy eyes with the contemplation of such perfection, turn and behold him as he now stands, clad in that purple garment of mockery, with a reed for a royal sceptre in his hand, with that horrid diadem on his brow, those sunken eyes and that ghastly face, his whole body stained with blood and defiled with loathsome spittle. Regard him both internally and externally, his heart pierced with grief, his body with wounds, forsaken by his disciples, persecuted by the Jews, mocked by the soldiers, vilified by the priests, cast out by an impious king, falsely accused and bereft of every human consolation.

7.—And think not of this as a thing of the past, but of the present hour ; not as the case of a stranger, but thy own. Imagine thyself the sufferer, and see what thy feelings would be, if thy head so sensitive to pain were pierced on all sides with long sharp thorns penetrating to the bone. But why should I say thorns ? Thou couldst scarcely endure the agony of a puncture from a pin. What must then have been the agony of that most tender head crowned with that wreath of torture ?

8.—Oh brightness of the glory of the Father ! who has thus maltreated thee ? Oh, unspotted mirror of the Majesty of God ! who has thus defiled thee ? Oh stream flowing out of the paradise of delights, and refreshing the city of God with thy joyful current ! who has muddied and polluted thy

waters? Oh my Lord! my sins have muddied them, my iniquities have polluted them. Woe is me, poor and miserable sinner! Woe is me! and how must my sins have defiled my soul when the sins of others have so fouled the bright fountain of all beauty? My sins, Oh Lord, are the thorns that pierce thee; my follies are the robe of purple that mocks thee; my deceits and hypocrisies are the ceremonials that insult thee; my pomp and vanities are the crown that crowns thee. I am thy executioner, I am the cause of thy

Paral. xxix.

suffering. King Ezechias caused the temple of the Lord which had been profaned by the wicked, to be purified, and ordered all the filth therefrom to be cast into the torrent of Cedron. I am that living temple polluted by the devil and defiled with innumerable sins, and thou art the pure river of Cedron refreshing with thy waters all the beauty of heaven; since there then all my sins are cast, there let all my iniquities disappear. Because through the merits of that ineffable charity and humility with which thou hast stooped to take upon thee all our evils, thou hast not only delivered me from them, but thou hast also made me a partaker in all thy blessings. Thou hast taken away my death, and hast given me thy life; thou hast taken away my flesh, and given me thy spirit; thou hast taken upon thyself my sins, and given me thy grace. Thus, Oh my Redeemer are all thy pains, my treasures and riches. Thy purple garment clothes me, thy crown dignifies me, thy stripes decorate me, thy sorrows regale me, thy bitters support me, thy wounds heal me, thy blood enriches me, and thy love inebriates me. What wonder that thy love should inebriate me, since the love thou hadst for me sufficed to inebriate and leave thee like another

Gen. ix.

Noah naked and exposed to shame? Thy burning love upholds that purple robe of scorn, thy zeal for my welfare retains that reed within thy grasp, and thy compassion for my lost condition sustains that crown of insult on thy brow.

§ 3.—*On the ECCE HOMO.*

9.—When the crowning and mockery of our Saviour were concluded, Pilate took him by the hand bleeding as he was and placing him before the furious rabble, addressed them saying, "*Ecce Homo*" behold the Man; as if he would say. If from envy you have sought his death, behold a subject not for envy, but compassion. Ye feared lest he should make himself King, behold him so disfigured as scarcely to bear the semblance of a man. What can ye fear from these shackled hands? What more can ye demand against this victim of the scourge?

10.—My soul, from this thou mayst learn, what was then the appearance of thy Saviour, as the judge believed the very sight of him would suffice to move the hearts of his enemies. Thus too thou mayst understand the unfortunate state of a christian who feels no compassion for the sufferings of Christ, since, in the opinion of the judge they were enough to melt those ferocious hearts. Where love is, there sorrow dwells. Who can then be said to love Jesus who feels no compassion for him when he beholds him in such a plight?

11.—If then the want of compassion for Christ be so great an evil, what must it be to aggravate his martyrdom, and add pain to pain? No greater cruelty could be found in the world than that of his enemies, who when the judge pointed out his miserable plight, cried out in these blood-thirsty words, "Crucify him, Crucify him." If that was such great cruelty, what is the cruelty of a christian, who says the same by his actions though he may not say so in words? Does not St. Paul tell us, that he who commits sin, crucifies again the Son of God, because as much as in him lies he does that which would again oblige Christ to suffer death, were not his first death sufficient? How hast thou then the hand and heart thus so often to crucify thy Lord? Thou shouldst consider that as the Judge presented that pitiable figure to the Jews, in the belief that no other method would better

serve than that sight to pacify their fury, so the eternal Father to-day presents it before all sinners because in truth there are no other means so powerful to withdraw them from sin as the placing that figure before their eyes. Consider then Oh my soul, that God at this moment presents that same figure before thee, and as it were says to thee, *Eccce Homo* ; that is ; Behold this man, see who he is, and remember that he is thy God, and now stands as thou seest him, on no other account than because of the sins of the world. See what sin has brought upon God himself. See what was necessary to make satisfaction for it. See how odious sin is to God, since to destroy it, he has thus extinguished the beauty of the face of his Son. Look at the vengeance God will take upon the sinner for his own sins, when he thus avenges upon his own Son the sins of others. Lastly behold the rigour of divine justice and the malice of sin, so fearfully depicted on the face of Christ. What more then was it possible to do, in order to fill man with the fear of God and a detestation of sin ?

12.—The conduct of God towards man may here be compared to that of a kind mother towards a giddy froward daughter. Finding entreaties and rebukes thrown away, she turns her anger against herself, she beats and tears herself, and with bleeding cheeks casts herself all disfigured before her child, to impress her with the heinousness of her fault and induce her, at least from compassion for her parent, to abandon her evil ways. In the same manner does the Almighty appear, to have here adopted a similar remedy for the chastisement of men, placing before them his divine likeness, that is, the face of his son abused and disfigured, in order that they, who in spite of his threats and punishments denounced against them through his prophets, have refused to abandon their evil ways, might at last moved to compassion by the sight of that divine figure, be turned from their wickedness. Thus before he would raise his hand against man, he here raised it against himself as the last resource to save him.

Therefore, though to offend against God was at all times a grievous sin, now after his assuming such a figure in order to destroy sin, it is not only a grievous sin, but an act of the basest cruelty and ingratitude.

13.—Continuing yet further the contemplation of this stage of the passion, besides the horror for sin suggested by it, thou mayst also take heart to consider the feelings of the Almighty himself at the same spectacle, which strongly as it moves the hearts of men, is much more potent to move the heart of God. For this purpose thou shouldst consider that the same figure that the Saviour presented then before the eyes of that furious rabble, he this day presents before the eyes of his tender Father, streaming as then with the same fresh streams of blood. What more powerful spectacle to soften the eyes of the Father than the blood-stained face of

Exod. xxv.

the Son? This is the propitiatory of gold,

Gen. ix.

this is the bow of divers colours set amongst the clouds of heaven and grateful to the sight of God. Here mercy beams from his eyes; here his justice is satisfied; here his honour is vindicated; here homage is rendered worthy of his greatness.

14.—Say then, Oh frail and incredulous man, if at this stage the appearance of thy Redeemer was such that it should have sufficed to soften the eyes of such cruel enemies, how much more would it melt the compassionate eyes of that tender Father for whose honour and in obedience to whose will all these sufferings were endured? Compare the eyes of both. Look upon one and the other and thou wilt see, how much more secure thou art of the mercy of the Father, when thou presentest this figure before him, than was Pilate of that of the Jews when he presented the same before them. Then in all thy prayers and under every temptation take this thy Lord as a shield between thee and God, and presenting it before him, cry out *Ecce Homo*. Behold here, Oh Lord my God, the man thou hast sought for so many years as a medi-

Ezech. xxii.

ator between thee and sinners. Behold here

Jerem. v.

the man, as just as thy goodness required and as justified as our sin demanded. Look down then upon us, Oh Lord our protector! and to move thee thereto look down upon the face of Christ. And do not, thou our Saviour and mediator, cease to present thyself before the eyes of thy Father on our behalf: and as thy love for us, induced thee to

Psalm lxxxiii.

surrender thy body into the hands of the executioner to be tortured, let it also induce thee to present it to the Eternal Father, that for thy sake he may vouchsafe to forgive us.

§ 4.—*On our Saviour carrying his cross.*

15.—After Pilate saw that the punishment which he had inflicted on that Divine Lamb, had failed to allay the fury of his enemies, he returned into the Pretorium and seated himself at the judgment seat to pass the final sentence in the cause. Already was the cross prepared and reared against the entrance gate prophetic of the doom impending over the head of the Saviour. When the cruel sentence had been proclaimed, his enemies to heap one cruelty upon another, load those bruised and mangled shoulders with the weight of the cross. Still our compassionate Lord shrunk not from the burthen loaded as it was with all our sins, but on the contrary through his love for us embraced it with the warmest fervour and obedience, and thus set out upon his journey like another true Isaac with the wood, instead of the sacrifice upon his

Gen. xxvii.

shoulders. The burthen is divided between the two, the son carries the wood and the body which has to serve for the sacrifice, the Father the fire and the knife which has to immolate him. Because the fire of the love of man and the knife of Divine Justice imposed the cross upon the Son of God. These two powers struggled in the breast of the Father, each claimed its rights. Love petitioned for man's pardon, justice for the punishment of sinners. Therefore that man might obtain pardon and that sin might be punished, the

Innocent delivered himself up to death for all. These are the fire and knife which the Patriarch Abraham carried in his hands in order to sacrifice his son, because the love of our salvation and zeal for justice caused the Eternal Father to sacrifice his Son upon the cross.

16.—Then does the Innocent one walk forth with that heavy burthen upon his wearied shoulders, followed by a great crowd and by many pious women who accompanied him with their tears. Who would not shed tears at the sight of the King of Angels, dragging step by step his heavy burthen with trembling knees and stooping frame, with downcast eyes

Luke xxiii.

and bleeding face, with that wreath upon his head, followed by those disgraceful yells and clamours against him?

17.—Meanwhile, my soul withdraw thy eyes for a short time from this cruel spectacle, and with hasty steps with anxious grief and weeping eyes, go to the house of the Virgin, and there prostrate before her feet cry out in sorrowing words. Oh Queen of Angels and of heaven, gate of Paradise, advocate of the world, refuge of sinners, help of the just, joy of the saints, mistress of virtues, mirror of purity, pattern of patience and of all perfection! Woe is me, my sovereign mistress! Why has my life endured till now? How can I endure to live, after my eyes have seen what they have looked upon? What more can I say, than that I have left thy only begotten Son and my Lord in the hands of his enemies bearing a cross upon his back to be crucified upon it?

18.—What agony can vie with that pang of grief that must have wrung the Virgin's heart? Her soul faints away, her face and limbs are bathed in a deadly sweat enough to sweep life itself away, did not the Almighty's dispensation save her for greater sorrows and a brighter crown.

19.—Next see the mother hurrying in search of her Son, the desire to behold him, restores the strength which grief had stript her of. She hears from afar the clash of arms, the

murmurs of the crowd and the cry of the heralds making their proclamation. Then she sees the glittering lances and halberds gleaming on high, she finds on the road drops of blood and wet crimson streams point out without further guide the route traversed by her Son. Nearer and nearer she draws nigh to her beloved Son, and stretches her eyes almost blind with tears to catch a glimpse of the beloved of her soul. Oh love and fear in the heart of Mary! She longs to look upon him, yet dreads the fearful sight. Arrived at last those heavenly eyes behold each other, their looks have reached their hearts and pierced their sorrowing souls. Mute are both tongues; but to the Virgin's heart thus speaks the love of her most beloved Son. Why comest thou here, my dove, my beloved, and my mother? Thy sorrows add to mine and thy sufferings to mine. Return, Oh mother, return to thy home; the company of thieves and murderers suits not thy virginal purity. Stay not but go and spare the pangs of both. Here I remain to be offered up as a victim for the world, this duty is not thine, and thy innocence has not deserved this torture. Return then, Oh my dove, to the ark till the waters of the deluge have subsided, for here thou wilt not find where to rest thee. There thou wilt spend thy time as of old in prayer and contemplation, and there, supported beyond thy own strength thou shalt best endure this tribulation.

20.—Then would the mother's heart respond to her Son's and say. Why orderest thou me thus, my Son? Why wouldst thou send me hence? Thou knowest, Oh my Lord and my God, that in thy presence, there is no place I need shun, and that there is no oratory for me but where thou art. How can I tear myself from thee and not tear myself asunder? This anguish so fills my heart, it leaves no room for other thoughts; without thee I can go nowhere, and from no other can I seek or accept consolation. My whole heart is centred in thee, it has taken up its dwelling within thine, and my life

hangs on thine. For nine months thou didst not disdain my womb as thy habitation, why shall I not for these three days abide in thee? If thou wilt take me here into thy bosom, with thee will I be crucified, with thee be laid in the sepulchre. With thee will I drink gall and vinegar, with thee will I suffer on the cross, and give up the ghost with thee.

21.—Thus would the heart of the Virgin speak, and thus she follows that sorrowful road that leads to the place of sacrifice.

22.—At the conclusion of the meditation make an act of thanksgiving and offer a petition as mentioned before in the second chapter.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MEDITATION ON THE SACRED MYSTERY OF OUR LORD'S CRUCIFIXION AND ON HIS SEVEN LAST WORDS; FOR FRIDAY MORNING.

Having made the sign of the cross with the preparation mentioned in the second chapter, meditate on the crucifixion and on those seven last words our Saviour spoke upon the cross.

§ 1.—*The Text of the Evangelists is as follows.*

1.—“He went forth,” says the Evangelist, “to that
John xix. place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew, *Golgotha*, and there they gave him wine mixed with gall to drink, and when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And it was about the third hour when they crucified him; and with him two robbers one on each side and Jesus in the midst.

Mark xv. And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith;

Isai. liii. And with the wicked he was reputed.”

John xix. “And Pilate wrote a title also; and he put it upon the cross, and the writing was, “*Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.*” This title therefore many of the Jews did read, because the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the City: and it was written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in

Latin. Then the Chief Priests of the Jews said to Pilate ; 'write not, The King of the Jews, but that he said, I am the King of the Jews.' Pilate answering said, 'What I have written, I have written.'"

2.—"And after they had crucified him they divided his
 Matt. xxvii. garments, casting lots ; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying : 'They
 Psalm xxi. divided my garments among them ; and upon my vesture they cast lots.' " This is what the Soldiers did.

3.—"And they that passed by, blasphemed him, wagging
 Matt. xxvii. their heads, and saying : 'Vah, thou that
 Mark xviii. destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save thy own self, if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.' In like manner also the Chief Priests, with the Scribes and Ancients, mocking said : 'He saved others ; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God ; let him now deliver him, if he will have him ; for he said I am the Son of God ;' And the self-same things the thieves also that were crucified
 Matt. xxvii. with him, reproached him with. But Jesus
 Luke xxi. said : 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' "

4.—"And one of those robbers who was hanged, blas-
 Luke xxiii. phemed him saying ; 'If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.' But the other answering, rebuked him, saying ; 'Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation ? and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds ; but this man hath done no evil.' And he said to Jesus ; 'Lord remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom.' And Jesus said to him ; 'Amen, I say to thee, This day thou shalt be with me in paradise.' "

5.—"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother,
 John xix. and his mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen."

6.—“When Jesus therefore had seen his mother, and the disciple standing whom he loved, he saith to his mother; ‘Woman, behold thy Son.’ After that he saith to the disciple; ‘Behold thy Mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her to his own.”

7.—“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying; *Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani!* that is, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me! And some that stood there and heard, said; This man calleth Elias; others said: Stay, let us see if Elias will come to take him down.”

8.—“Afterwards, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said: ‘I thirst;’ Now there was a vessel set there full of vinegar, and they filled a sponge with vinegar and put it upon hyssop and put it on a reed and gave him to drink. Jesus therefore, when he had taken the vinegar, said: ‘It is consummated,’”

9.—“And Jesus crying out again with a loud voice, said; ‘Father into thy hands I commend my spirit.’ And from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour: and the earth quaked and the rocks were rent; and many bodies of the saints that had slept arose; And there were there many women afar off who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him; among whom was Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.”

§ 2.—*Meditation on the foregoing Texts.*

10.—Oh my soul, we have arrived at Mount Calvary, and reached the height of the mystery of our Redemption. Oh, how wonderful is this spot! In truth this is the house of God, the gate of heaven, the land of promise and the place of salvation. Here the tree of life is planted; here the mystic ladder of Jacob is seen which reaching from earth to heaven, angels descend down to men and men mount

Gen. iii.
and xxviii.

up to God. Oh my soul, this is the place of prayer; here thou oughtest to adore and bless the Lord and give him thanks for this his greatest blessing, saying; Oh Lord Jesus Christ, we adore thee and bless thy holy name, because through the means of this holy cross, thou hast redeemed the world; we thank thee, Oh most clement Saviour, for having thus loved us, for having washed away our sins with thy blood, for having offered thyself a victim for us upon this cross, that with the sweet odour of this noble sacrifice, kindled with the fire of thy love, thou mightest satisfy and appease the wrath of God. Blessed be thou for ever, Oh Saviour of the world, reconciler of mankind, reinstator of the angels, renovator of the heavens, conqueror of hell, victor of the devil, author of life, destroyer of death and redeemer of those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

11.—Come then, all ye that thirst, to the waters, and all ye that have neither gold nor silver, come and receive every
 Isaiah iv. bounty gratis. Ye who thirst after the
 Exod. xxvii. waters of life, behold the mystic rock struck
 by the rod of Moses in the desert, whence gushed abundant
 streams of water to satisfy a thirsty people. Ye who seek for
 peace and the friendship of God, behold here also that stone
 Gen. xxv. which the Patriarch Jacob anointed with oil
 and set up as a testimony of friendship and peace between
 God and man. Ye who want wine to heal your wounds,
 behold here the grapes brought from the land of promise to
 this vale of tears, which are now trodden and pressed in this
 Num. xiii. wine press of the cross for our remedy. Ye
 who are in quest of the oil of divine grace, behold here that
 precious cruise of the widow's oil mentioned by Eliseus, with
 IV. Kings iv. which we must all discharge our debts;
 and though the cruise seems small regard not its size, but
 its power which will whilst there are vessels to fill, pour out
 a never-failing stream of this sacred oil.

§ 3.

12.—Awaken now my soul and reflect on this holy mystery of the cross, the fruit of which cures that poisonous fruit of the forbidden tree, as the Spouse explained to his beloved in Cant. viii. the Canticles, when he said: "Under the apple tree I raised thee up; there thy mother was corrupted, there she was deflowered that bore thee."

13.—Behold then, how thy Saviour having reached this spot, to increase the infamy of his death, was stript by his unfeeling enemies of all his garments, even to his under tunic which was woven all in one piece without a seam. Behold too, the meekness of that most innocent lamb, submitting to be stript without opening his mouth or uttering a single word of complaint against his persecutors. On the contrary, he submitted cheerfully to be spoiled of his garments and to stand naked exposed to shame, in order that he might more effectually, than with fig leaves, cover the nakedness of those, who through sin had lost the robes of innocence and grace. Some learned doctors suppose that in order to remove this tunic, they with great cruelty plucked from his head the crown of thorns, and afterwards replaced it, forcing anew the thorns into the brain and tearing open fresh wounds. And this is not difficult to believe of those, who had made use of so many strange and outrageous cruelties through every stage of his passion.

14.—And as the tunic was glued to his wounds with the congealed blood, these miscreants, void of every sense of pity, as they stript it off his body, rent it away with one savage tear, and with such violence as to flay his sacred body, and open afresh all the wounds inflicted by the scourges. Thus did he stand streaming with blood, one gaping wound extending on every side from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet.

15.—Here then, my soul, reflect on the greatness of God's goodness and mercy, so clearly shewn in this mystery. See

how he who robes the heavens with clouds, and clothes the fields with flowers and verdure, is here stript of all his garments. See how angelic beauty is here defaced, the sublimity of heaven humiliated, and the Majesty and greatness of God thrown down and trampled upon. See how that royal blood threads its way through the dishevelled hair of that sacred head till it trickles to and stains the ground. Consider the shivering cold that sacred body would suffer, butchered as it was and naked, and not only without clothing, but even flayed and skinned, with open doors and windows of wounds on every side. And if St. Peter the previous night, wrapt in all his clothing felt the cold, how much more bitter

John xviii.

must have been the sufferings of that most tender body so wounded and so naked?

16.—Hence it appears, that though our Saviour during the whole course of his life presented before us so many wonderful examples of naked poverty, nevertheless in his death he shewed us the most perfect mirror of this virtue, since there he was so poor that he had not whereon to lean his head, and there he shewed us that he carried away nothing of this world with him and that nothing of this world clung to him. In conformity with this example, we read of the blessed St. Francis, a true imitator of the poverty of Christ, that at the time of his death, he stript himself of everything, and throwing himself out of his bed upon the floor, embraced the bare ground to imitate like a faithful servant, the nakedness and poverty of his Master. Go then thou, my soul, and learn here also, poor and naked to follow in the footsteps of Christ, learn also to despise all the world can give, that thou mayst deserve with naked arms to embrace thy naked Master, and in order to be joined to him through love, learn also to be naked and free from every other love.

§ 4.

17.—Consider next how our Lord was nailed to the cross, and the pain he would suffer whilst those thick angular

nails were driven through the most sensitive parts of his most tender body. And see also how the Virgin would suffer when her own eyes saw and her own ears heard the cruel heavy blows falling so often upon those divine limbs and members. See how they then raised the cross on high to fix it in the hole already prepared to receive it, and how in their cruelty, in setting it, they let it fall with a shock and thus caused that divine body to quiver in the air, tore open more widely those gaping wounds, and added another pang to all his agonies.

18.—Then Oh my Saviour and Redeemer, where is the heart so hard as not to break with grief, since on this day the
Matt. xxvii. rocks themselves were rent, at the contemplation of thy agonies on the cross? The sorrows of death Oh Lord have encompassed thee, and the waves of the sea have overwhelmed thee, thou art stuck in the depths of the abyss and thou hast not whereon to sustain thee. The Father has deserted thee, Oh my Lord what canst thou hope from men? Thy enemies cry out against thee, thy friends break thy heart, thy soul is filled with trouble, and thou refuseth all consolation for love of me. Truly my sins were heinous, thy penance declares this. I behold thee, Oh my King, nailed to a tree; there is nothing to sustain the weight of thy body but three iron hooks, on these thy sacred flesh is hung without other support; when thou retest thy weight upon thy feet, their wounds are torn by the nails that pierce them, when upon thy hands, their wounds are rent by the weight of thy body. No limb can aid another without equal anguish to itself. Then that sacred head tortured and weakened with the crown of thorns, what pillow will support it? Oh most serene Virgin how would thy arms long to perform that office? But no, there thine must not serve, but the arms of the cross! On them will that sacred head recline when seeking for support, and the relief from them will drive in the thorns still deeper to the brain. Beyond all this, I see those four principal

wounds like four fountains ever gushing blood: I see the soil puddled and running with blood, I see this most precious fluid trampled upon and spilt over the ground, crying out better
Gen. iv. than the blood of Abel, because that cried for vengeance against a murderer, but this craves forgiveness for sinners.

§ 5.—*On the Son's sympathy for his Mother, and the Mother's for her Son upon the cross.*

19.—The sufferings of the Son were aggravated by the presence of the Mother, his heart was crucified within like his sacred body was crucified externally. Oh Good Jesus, there are two crosses for thee this day; one for thy body, another for thy soul, one the cross of thy passion, the other the cross of thy compassion. The one pierces thy body with nails of iron, and the other thy soul with the nails of grief.

20.—Oh Good Jesus, what tongue can describe thy feelings when thou didst consider the anguish of that most holy soul, which thou knewest so well was crucified with thee upon the cross? When thou sawest that tender heart pierced with the sword of grief? When thou didst raise thy bloodshot eyes and saw that heavenly face stamped with the bitterness of death? and the agonies of her soul unrelieved by death, and suffering more than all the pains of death? and those floods of tears gushing from her pure eyes, and heard those smothered groans struggling in that sacred breast so overwhelmed with crushing sorrow? Truly, it is impossible to magnify the tortures suffered by thy compassionate heart racked on this invisible cross.

21.—And who, on the other hand, Oh blessed Mother, can describe the excess of thy grief and anguish, at the sight of the death under such frightful torments, of him whose birth thou hadst witnessed with such delight? When thou sawest mocked and blasphemed by men, him whose praises thou hadst listened to chaunted by angels? When thou saw-

est that holy body fondled with such reverence and nursed with such care by thee, so cruelly illtreated by the wicked? When thou sawest that divine mouth suckled by thee with the milk of heaven, embittered with vinegar and gall? And that divine head which had so often been pressed to thy virgin breast, wreathed with a bloody crown of thorns? Oh how often didst thou raise thy eyes to gaze on that divine form, the sight of which had so often gladdened thy soul, and turn them away because thy tender heart could no longer endure the sight!

22.—What tongue can proclaim the greatness of this grief? If those who truly love Christ, by the mere contemplation of these sorrows now past away, are moved with such tender compassion for him, what would thy feelings be, his Mother, yea more than Mother, seeing with thy own eyes, such a son suffering such a passion? If those women who followed our Lord when he carried his cross, unconnected by any tie of blood, wept and lamented at beholding such a piteous figure, what weeping would be there at the sight of one so bound to thee, not only bearing his cross upon his back but nailed upon it and lifted up on high?

23.—And great as these sorrows were, thou didst not refuse, Oh blessed Virgin, the company of the cross, thou didst not turn thy back upon it, but close to, not prostrate at the foot, thou didst stand erect, like a pillar of strength, looking with unutterable anguish on thy Son upon the cross, in order that as Eve, by gazing with longing eyes on the fruit and the tree of death was the means of bringing perdition into the world, so thou gazing with bitterness upon the fruit of life and on the tree from which it hung mightest bring to the world, salvation.

§ 6.—*A further meditation on the lessons to be learned at the foot of the Cross.*

24.—“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus,” says the John xix. Evangelist, “his Mother, and his Mother’s

sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen." Oh that I could always in the company of these three happy Marys stand at the foot of the cross! Oh fortunate Marys! Who made you stand so firm and fixed at the foot of the cross? What chain binds you so tightly to this sacred tree? Oh dying Christ thou who chastiseth the living in giving life to the dead! Oh, ye angels of paradise! Reproach me not a miserable sinner for daring to draw nigh to this holy company; for it is love that urges me forward and compels me to embrace this cross. If these three Marys will not leave the cross, where shall I go, since on it depends my salvation? The burning flame shall freeze, the tepid fount shall boil, before my heart can tear itself from this cross as long as I can feel what love has taught me, how great a happiness it is to be ever at the foot of the cross. Oh Cross! thy attraction for the heart is stronger than that of the loadstone for iron! thou sheddest a brighter light upon the understanding than does the mid-day sun upon the eye, thou inflamest our souls with greater heat, than fire imparts to fuel. Oh Holy Cross! draw me closely to thee, ever shine to enlighten me, ever inflame me, that my thoughts may never stray from thee. And thou, Oh Good Jesus! enlighten the eyes of my soul, that I may know how to love the cross; that I may not only contemplate those cruel torments endured for my sake, to excite my compassion for thee, but also to serve as models of every virtue for my imitation.

25.—Then, Oh Ruler of the World! and physician of our souls! behold me at the foot of thy cross laying bare my wounds before thee; heal me, Oh my God, and teach me what to do. Oh Lord, I know I am full of sensuality and self-love, and I know this is a great obstacle to my amendment. Oftentimes for amusement and pastime, or from a dread of the trouble of fasting and early rising, I forget my pious and devout exercises, and losing them, I myself am lost. My sensuality is at all times importunate, anxious for dainty

feeding at every hour and season, wishing after each meal for recreation and diversion, delighted to spend the hour in sauntering in the garden and in the refreshing indulgence of a walk. Teach me, my Saviour my duty by thy example. Oh what confusion for me to see how thou didst treat thy most delicate body ! In the midst of the agonies and pains of death, thou hadst no other food or medicine but gall and vinegar compounded by those cruel doctors. Who will venture now to complain of his meals being cold or badly drest, or whether they are sent up late or early, if he only thinks, Oh my God, of what was set before thee in the hour of thy greatest need ? In place of the pleasant talk and recreation that I seek for in my dinners and feasts, the pleasantries which sounded in thy ears, were the scoffs and blasphemies of those who wagged their heads in scorn, crying

Matt. xxvii.

out ; 'Vah ! thou that destroyest the temple

Mar. xv.

of God and in three days rebuildest it : ' this

was the music at thy banquet. And thy garden walk was being nailed by the hands and feet upon the cross. Still there was another garden for thee after thy supper, not for recreation, but for prayer, not to take an airing in, but to shed thy blood in, not for amusement but for sorrow and for an agony even unto death. Then, what shall I say of the other comforts of thy blessed body ? Mine loves a soft bed, sumptuous attire and a handsome spacious house ; describe to me, Oh holy love, thy bed, thy house and thy apparel. Thy garments are nakedness and a purple robe of mockery. Thy house is public exposure in the broad light of day, and if I seek further, a stable for cattle. The fox has his den, and the birds of the air their nests ; but thou the Creator of all hast not whereon to rest thy head. Oh rarities and superfluities, how comes it ye are accumulated in a christian land ? Were we only true christians, we should throw away all these dainties and superfluities, since our Lord and Master not only rejected superfluities but also the necessities of life.

26.—Oh my Lord, I have yet to see thy bed. Tell me,

Cant. 1.

Oh thou whom my soul loveth, where thou liest? where thou takest thy rest at noon? Behold me at thy feet; instruct me in what I should do, because my sensuality seeks not to learn the language of thy cross. I love a soft bed, and if I waken for the hour of prayer I allow myself to be conquered by sloth, and expect in the morning sleep and repose. Tell me, Oh Lord, what repose didst thou find on this bed of the cross? When thou wast weary of lying on one side, how didst thou turn to the other for greater comfort? Is not this enough to break my heart? Is not this sufficient to destroy all sensuality? Oh consolation for the poor, but confusion for the rich! Oh support for the repentant sinner, but condemnation for the dainty and the sensual! The bed of Christ is not for you, neither is his glory. Grant me grace, Oh Lord, that following thy example I may mortify my sensuality; and if thou grantest it not, I beseech thee at this moment let me end my life so that I, whilst thou art refreshed with gall and vinegar upon the cross, may not be seeking for luxuries and dainties; and whilst thou art poor and naked, be a lost one wandering in search of worldly goods; and whilst thou art stretched on a bed of wood, I be hunting for a couch of down whereon to repose my limbs.

27.—Blush then, Oh my soul, at the sight of thy Lord upon the cross: and listen to his preaching and his rebukes addressed to thee from it. Oh man, for thee I accepted this crown of thorns, and dost thou in mockery of me wear a garland of flowers? For thee I stretched my hands upon the cross, and dost thou stretch thine after pleasures and balls? In the agony of death I had not a draught of water, and dost thou seek for precious wines and delicacies? I was laid upon the cross and lived a whole life of insults and sorrows, and dost thou pass thy life lost in the pursuit of honours and pleasures? I allowed my side to be opened to give thee my heart, and dost thou open thine to admit vain and dangerous love?

§ 7.—*On the patience we should practice under tribulations
in imitation of Christ.*

28.—Thou hast instructed me, Oh Lord, from this chair in the law of temperance; teach me also now the law of patience of which I stand much in need. Thou hast cured my concupiscence, cure also my irascibility, for thy cross is an universal remedy and the leaves of this sacred tree are the health of the world. At times I have said within myself; I will be angry with no one, I will be at peace with every one, and to enable me to do this it appears best to shun all society and so avoid every occasion for quarrelling and anger.

29.—But I now know my weakness on this point, because avoiding company is not conquering anger, but only covering my imperfections. Henceforth then it is my desire to be prepared to live not only amongst the good but also amongst the bad, and to be at peace with those who hate peace. Thus I propose to act; give me grace, Oh my God, to succeed. If I am robbed of my estate, suffer me not on that account to be overcome with grief, because I see thee upon that cross stript and naked. If they rob me of my honour, allow not that to rob me of my peace of mind, since I here see thee so dishonoured and despised. If friends forsake me, let me not therefore be confounded, since I see thee here alone and deserted, not only by thy friends and thy disciples, but even by thy Father. And if ever it should appear to me as if I were forsaken by thee, let me not on that account despair, because thou didst not despair, when after having cried out ‘My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ thou didst immediately commend thy spirit into the hands of him who had deserted thee. Henceforth then I invoke ye troubles and persecutions, I call upon ye to overwhelm me, since ye can do nothing but afford me opportunities of imitating my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

30.—Nevertheless, Oh Lord, should my sufferings be long and enduring, how shall I console myself? Because

thine though severe, appear to have lasted only a short time, as the martyrdom of thy passion did not extend over twenty hours. What comfort then can he, who for ten years is confined to his bed or in prison or in continued sorrow and vexation in his own house, derive from thy example, for so long a struggle? Answer me, Oh my Lord, this question, since thou art the voice and the wisdom of the Father. Tell me if thou art the universal comfort under every tribulation however long it may endure, or must we seek elsewhere another comforter. In truth it is not necessary to seek any other comforter besides thee, for that cross upon which thou didst suffer, was not the martyrdom of a solitary day but of an entire life. For from the very hour of thy most holy conception, the cross was always present to thee and all thou hadst to suffer upon it, it was never from before thy eyes during the whole term of thy life. Because as the past and the future were always present to thy divine understanding, so were thy martyrdom and all the instruments of thy passion. The cross, the nails, the stripes, and thorns, the cruel lance were there; all those weapons were there present, as clearly as when with the eyes of thy body thou sawest them on the Friday of the cross. However severe our sufferings are, we often find some hours of alleviation from medicine or repose, but thy sufferings were ever, as it were, continuous or at all events frequently tormented thy soul during thy whole career upon earth. And had no such suffering afflicted thee, thy zeal for the honour of thy Father and for the salvation of our souls, which gnawed and devoured thy heart, was a martyrdom for thee more painful than death itself. To this was added the obstinacy of that rebellious people, and the hardness of all other sinners for whose sake thou wast sent, and who would not profit by this benefit, nor know the time of thy visitation. Hence flowed those tears of compassion which thou didst shed over Jerusalem, and hence thy complaint through

Luke xix.

the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah; "I said,

Isaiah xlix. in vain have I toiled, and to no purpose and without cause have I wasted my strength."

31.—Here then, my soul, thou hast one to bear thee company and afford thee consolation under the longest trials, for though the last sufferings of Jesus were short, the sorrows of his compassionate heart and soul were long and enduring.

32.—At the close of the meditation make an act of thanksgiving and offer a petition, as before mentioned in the second chapter.

CHAPTER XXV.

MEDITATION ON THE WOUND IN OUR SAVIOUR'S SIDE;
ON THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS; ON THE SORROWS
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN; AND ON THE BURIAL OF
CHRIST; FOR SATURDAY MORNING.

Having made the sign of the cross with the preparation mentioned in the second chapter, the subject for thy meditation will be, the wound in thy Saviour's side and the descent from the cross with the sorrows of our Lady and the burial of Christ.

§ 1.—*The following is the text of the Evangelists.*

John xix.	ing that the bodies should remain upon the
Luke xxiii.	cross on the Sabbath, on account of its being
Mark xv.	a day of great solemnity, asked permission
Matt. xvii.	of Pilate to break the legs and remove the

bodies from the cross. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the two thieves who had been crucified. And when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs, but one of the soldiers opened his side with a spear, and there came out immediately blood and water. And he that saw it hath given testimony, and we know that his testimony is true."

2.—“And when it was evening, there came a certain rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also himself looking for the Kingdom of God and he went in boldly to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. But Pilate wondered that he should be already dead; and sending for the centurion, he asked him if he was already dead. And when he had understood it by the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. And Nicodemus also came, ~~he~~ who at the first came to Jesus by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about one hundred pounds weight, and Joseph brought fine linen, and taking him down, wrapped him up in the fine linen with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now there was in the place where he was crucified, a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein no man had yet been laid. There, therefore because of the parascève of the Jews, they laid Jesus, because the sepulchre was nigh at hand. And there were there Mary Magdalen and the other Mary sitting over against the sepulchre and they saw the place where they laid him.”

§ 2.—*The Meditation on the above passages.*

3.—Hitherto, thou hast celebrated, Oh my soul, the death and sufferings of the Son; it is time thou shouldst begin to celebrate and bewail those of the Mother. For this purpose sit thyself down for a few moments at the feet of the Prophet Jeremiah; and taking up the parable from his mouth with sorrow and bitterness of heart, say; Oh most innocent Virgin, how dost thou sit solitary like to a widow, Oh mistress
Lamen :
Jeremiah i. of the world? How without any fault of thine have they made thee tributary to such sufferings? Oh most holy Virgin! I long to comfort thee, but I know not how: I long to assuage the bitterness of thy sorrow, but I know not how. Queen of heaven, if the sufferings of thy blessed Son, and not thy own, were the cause of thine, as thou didst love him more than thyself, his sorrow is now

ended, since his body no longer suffers and his soul is now glorious ; cease then thy lamentations, because the cause for them has ceased. Thou didst weep with him when he wept, it is fit thou shouldst rejoice with him now that he is filled with joy. Let the bright fountain of thy eyes, clearer than

Cant. vii.

the waters of Hesebon, but now muddied with the floods of so many tears, be closed. The anger of the Lord is satisfied by the sacrifice of the true Noah ; stop the

Gen. viii.

deluge of thy most sacred eyes, and let the earth smile with fresh serenity. The dove hath gone forth from the ark ; she will bring back emblems of the divine clemency ; rejoice then in hope and let thy lamentations cease. Thy Son bids thee cease thy mourning, and invites thee to new joys in the canticles, saying ; 'The winter is now past, the rains and

Cant. ix.

storms are over ; the flowers have appeared on the earth ; arise then, my beloved, my sister, and my dove, why remainest thou in the holes of the rocks, and in the clefts about, that is in the wounds of my body ; 'quit that habitation now, and come with me.'

4.—Too well, I see, Oh blessed Lady, this is not enough to console thee, thy sorrow has not departed, it has only been changed. One martyrdom is over and is succeeded by another. Fresh wounds stab thy heart, and fresh tortures succeed the past, so that with every change the torments of the passion are repeated. Hitherto thou hast mourned over his sufferings, now thou mournest over his death, hitherto over his passion, now over thy own bereavement, hitherto over his sorrows, now over his absence, one wave swept over, and another and yet another has broken over thee ; so that the end of his sufferings is a fresh beginning of thine.

5.—And as if these sufferings were nothing I see others yet greater awaiting thee. Oh heavenly Mother, close thy eyes, look not at that spear gleaming in the air, watch not where it is about to fall. Now is thy desire fulfilled ; thou art become a shield for thy Son, because that blow strikes thee

and not him. Thou didst seek the nails and thorns, but they were for his body, the spear was reserved for thee. Oh ministers of cruelty, Oh hearts of iron, are the sufferings of the living body so trivial that ye cannot spare the dead! what malice is so unsatiable as not to be satisfied with the dead body of its enemy lying prostrate before it? Lift up your cruel eyes, look on that dead face, see those inanimate eyes, that bloodless countenance, that wan and pallid hue of death; and though ye be harder than iron or the diamond, or than your own selves, ye must be softened at the sight. Why are ye not content with the wounds of the Son, must ye also strike down the Mother? Ye wound her with that lance, ye strike her with that blow, ye plunge that savage spear into her breast.

6.—Then did a soldier with a spear in his hand pierce with a violent stab the naked breast of our Saviour. The cross shook with the violence of the blow, and there gushed forth water and blood, to wash away the sins of the world. Oh river flowing out of paradise and refreshing with thy streams the face of the whole earth! Oh wound in that precious side inflicted rather by love of man than by the steel of the cruel lance! Oh gate of heaven, window of paradise, place of refuge, tower of strength, sanctuary of the just, sepulchre of the wanderer, nest of the timid dove and flowery bed of the Spouse of Solomon! Hail wound in that precious side that woundest the hearts of the devout, hail blow that strikest the souls of the just, rose of peerless beauty, most precious ruby, entrance to the heart of Christ, witness of his love and pledge of everlasting life. Through thee all creatures

Gen. vii.

enter to be saved from the deluge in the ark of the true Noah, to thee the tempted cling, in thee the sorrowful find consolation, in thee the sick find their cure, through thee the sinner enters heaven, in thee the exile and the stranger find sleep and rest. Oh furnace of love, abode of peace, treasury of the church and spring of living waters

bursting up to life eternal! Open unto me, Oh Lord, that gate, receive my heart in that delightful dwelling, let me pass through there to the bowels of thy love; may I drink of that pure fountain; may I be washed with that holy water, intoxicated with that precious drink; may my soul slumber in that sacred bosom; may I there forget all the cares of the world; there may I sleep, there take my food, there sweetly sing with the prophet, saying; "This is my dwelling-place for ever and ever, here will I stay because I have chosen it for my habitation."

Psalm cxxxi.

§ 3.—*On the descent from the Cross and the lament of the Virgin.*

7.—Consider next how that sacred body was removed from the cross and received in the arms of the Virgin. On the evening of the same day, those two devout men Joseph and Nicodemus, come and setting ladders against the cross carry down our Saviour's body in their arms. When the Virgin saw that the sufferings on the cross had ended and that the sacred body had reached the ground, she would hasten to offer it a secure haven in her bosom and to receive it from the arms of the cross into her own.

8.—What tongue can tell the feelings of that Mother when she clasped Him in her arms? Oh angels of peace, weep with this sacred Virgin; ye heavens weep, ye stars of heaven weep. Oh all created things join with Mary in her lament. See the Mother embrace the mangled corpse and press it to her breast, see her face amongst the thorns that pierce his heavenly brow; see how her cheek is laid on his, the Mother's cheek stained with blood of the Son and the lifeless cheek of the Son bedewed with the Mother's tears. Oh sweet Mother! Is this then thy beloved Son? Is this he whom thou didst conceive with such glory and brought forth with such joy? Thy past delights, where have they gone? Thy former joys, where have they fled? That mirror of

beauty in which thou didst admire thyself, where is it? It is vain now to gaze on that face, the light of those eyes is darkened. It is vain to talk, it is vain to speak to Him, for those ears are deaf to thy words; now mute is that tongue that was wont to tell thee of the wonders of heaven, and closed are those eyes whose sparkling rays gladdened the world. Why art thou silent, Oh heavenly Queen? Have thy sorrows made thee dumb? Thy tongue indeed was silent, but thy heart within would thus discourse unutterable grief with thy beloved Son and say :—

9.—Oh life itself now dead! Oh light extinguished now! Oh beauty now defiled! and whose were the hands that have thus profaned thee? What is this crown I feel upon thy head? whence came this wound in thy side? Oh High Priest of the world! what are these marks I see upon thy body? who has stained the mirror of heavenly beauty? who has disfigured the comeliness of this celestial face? are these those eyes whose beauty dimmed the sun? are these the hands whose touch did raise the dead to life? is this the mouth whence issued the four rivers of paradise? have the hands of men prevailed so much against God? My Son of my own blood, whence did this fierce tempest rush? whence came the wave that swept thee from me thus? Oh my Son, without thee what shall I do? where shall I go? who will help me? Fathers and sorrowing brothers were wont to supplicate thee for their dead children and brethren, and thou in thy infinite power and clemency gavest them comfort and help. But I who now behold before me dead my Son and my Father my Brother and my Lord, whom shall I supplicate for him? who will console me? where now is the Good Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the Living God, who gave consolation to the living and his life for the dead? where is that Great Prophet, powerful in word and works?

10.—Oh my Son hitherto my rest and prop, but now my sword of grief, what didst thou do that they should crucify

thee? why did they put thee to such a death? is this the gratitude for all thy goodness? is this the reward of all thy virtues? is this the pay for thy teaching? has the wickedness of the world, has the malice of the devil reached to this? is this the bounty and clemency of God? and is the hatred of God for sin so great that this was necessary to satisfy it for one sin? is the rigour of divine justice so severe? and does God set such value on the salvation of mankind?

11.—Oh my most beloved Son what shall I do without thee? Thou art my Son, my Father, my Spouse, my Master, and my All. Behold me like an orphan without a father, a widow without a spouse, alone deprived of such a master and such a companion. No more shall I see thee cross my threshold after thy labours in preaching and teaching the Gospel. No more shall I wipe the sweat from thy brow after the fatigues of thy labours and travels. Never again shall I see thee seated at my table and bestowing on my soul the food of thy divine presence. Now hath thy glory departed from me, this day has my joy come to an end and my widowhood commenced.

12.—Why art thou silent, my Son? Oh heavenly tongue wont to address words of comfort to so many, to give speech and life to others, who has bound thee to silence with thy Mother? How is it thou hast no command for thy Mother, no commission to console her? With thy leave I will undertake one. This royal crown shall be the commission, these nails and this spear shall be thy legacy. These precious treasures I will ever preserve in my heart, there shall these nails be driven, there shall thy crown be kept, there thy scourges, there thy cross. This is my inheritance chosen by me for the whole course of my life.

13.—How short lived on earth is joy, and how very bitter is sorrow after long prosperity! Oh Bethlehem and Jerusalem how different the times I past in you! How brightly beamed that night, how gloomy frowns this day! How rich was I then, and now how poor! Great indeed was the loss of such

a treasure. Oh welcome angel! where now are the congratulations of thy former salutation? My trouble and my fear in that hour were not vain, for great misfortunes or heavy crosses always follow the brightest joys. The Lord does not desire his gifts should lie idle, to honours he joins responsibilities, to dignities he attaches services, and great graces are not bestowed unless earned by severe struggles. Thou didst then salute me as full of grace, now I am full of sorrow. Then as blessed amongst women; I am now the most sorrowful amongst them. Thou saidst then: The Lord is with thee; now also he is with me, no longer living but dead I fold him in my arms.

14.—Oh my beloved Redeemer! was I wrong when I clasped thee in my arms with such joy at thy birth, that now I should hold thee in them in such torture after thy death? was it sinful to take such delight in nursing thee with the sweet milk of my breast, that now I am condemned to drink of this bitter chalice? was I offending when I gazed on thy face as a shining mirror, that I should now behold it so stained and mangled? was it a crime to love thee so much that thou shouldst make my love my executioner, and that my sufferings should be proportioned to my love?

15.—Oh eternal Father, lover of man and full of compassion for him, but rigorous towards thy Son! Thou knowest the storm and tempest that rage in my heart. Thou knowest for every blow and every wound inflicted on his sacred body, as many deaths hath this poor heart suffered. Nevertheless I the most afflicted creature in this world return thee infinite thanks for this affliction. Enough for me to know it is thy will. From thy hand I welcome the knife that wounds me. Both for thy favours and thy inflictions I give thee thanks; for thy bounties hitherto bestowed, I bless thee, and instead of repining now that thou withdrawest them, I hand back thy deposit with grateful thanks. May the angels bless thee for both, and may my tears unite with theirs in ever blessing

thee. But I entreat thee, Oh my Father, if it be pleasing to thee, to be satisfied with three and thirty years of continued

Luke II.

martyrdom. Thou knowest, from the day the Holy Simeon foretold me this martyrdom, that all my pleasures were embittered and the sword of grief then pierced my heart. Memory ever tinged all my joys with this sorrow, and never was my most innocent delight without a sting because of the thought and dread of this day. I know thy providence superintended all, and that it was thy pleasure that from that moment I should be made acquainted with this mystery, in order that as the Son always bore the cross before his eyes from the day of his conception, so I his Mother should also bear it. Thus is it thy will, that those whom thou lovest should ever suffer in this life, and in this vale of tears thou dost not wish our pleasures, though centred in thee, to be great and lasting. Then, Oh my King, may it please thee that this be the end of my martyrdom; nevertheless not my will, but thy divine will be done. If one martyrdom appears to thee but little for a woman to undergo, full well thou knowest I suffered martyrdom for every wound that was inflicted on my Saviour. Now are his sufferings at an end but mine are again beginning. Bid death return for the spoils he has left behind, and bear the Mother with the Son to the tomb. Oh happy sepulchre, in having succeeded me; the crown they take from me they will give to thee, and then thou wilt enclose in thy womb him who was confined in mine! My bones would rejoice to repose there and there indeed should I find life in the grave. My heart and soul I can there entomb, but, my body, Oh Lord, not without thee. Death! why art thou so cruel as to separate me from him on whose life depended mine? At times thy mercy is more cruel than thy slaying. Thou wouldst shew mercy to me, if thou wouldst take away both; but now thou art cruel both in thy slaughter of the Son and in thy sparing the Mother.

16.—Such exclamations would fill the Virgin's heart and such would fill the hearts of the devout Marys who accompanied her. All who were present would weep, those holy women and those devout men would weep, heaven and earth and all nature join the Virgin in her tears. The holy evangelist would weep and embracing the body of his Master, cry out ; Oh my Good Lord and Master henceforth who will be my instructor ? Whom shall I seek to solve my doubts ? On whose bosom shall I recline ? Who will make me a partaker of the secrets of heaven ? How has this sudden change come to pass ? But last night thou didst support me on thy divine breast, filling my life with delight, and now I repay thy infinite goodness by pressing thy dead form to mine. Is this the face I saw transfigured on the mount ? Is this that body brighter than the noonday sun ?

17.—The repentant Magdalen would also weep and embracing the feet of her Saviour say ; Oh light of my eyes, and salvation of my soul ! If I should see myself tempted to sin, who will receive me ? Who will heal my wounds ? Who will answer for me ? Who will protect me from the Pharisees ? Oh once before I lay at those feet, I washed them then and through them was I accepted by thee ! Oh joy of my heart, would that I could now die with thee ? Life of my soul ! how can I say I love thee, since I live and thou liest dead before me ?

18.—Thus would all that holy band weep and lament and wash with their tears the sacred body of our Lord. At length the hour arrived to consign it to the tomb, they wrap it in a clean winding sheet and bind it with cloths and placing it on a bearer remove it to the place of the monument and there deposit their sacred treasure. The door of the sepulchre is covered with a large stone, but the heart of the Mother covered with a cloud of grief ; there again is she torn from her Son ; there she begins again to feel her loneliness ; and

there she sees herself despoiled of all her wealth, and there where her treasure is, her heart too lies buried.

§ 4.—*Why the blessed Virgin and all the just are afflicted with divers tribulations in this life.*

19.—Oh eternal Father! since of thy infinite goodness and mercy thou didst require thy blessed Son to suffer thus for our sins, why dost thou also require this sacred Virgin to suffer also; she deserves not death on account of the sins of others, for these the death of thy Son suffices, nor on account of her own sins, for she is innocent? How easily mightest thou have tempered this grief; had she not been at that time in Jerusalem an eye witness of the death of her Son, her sorrow would not have been aggravated by that scene! Oh how wonderful are the dispensations, how inscrutable the counsels of God! Thou didst desire, Oh Lord, that she should suffer, not for the redemption of the world, but because there is nothing in the world more pleasing in thy sight, than sufferings endured for the love of thee. There is nothing in all creation more precious in thy sight than the glorious love of the blessed in heaven, and the suffering love of the just

Philip. i.

upon earth. There is no greater honour in

Acts xv.

the House of God than to suffer for the love

of him. Amongst all the good deeds and all the services rendered to thee by our Saviour in this world this was that which thou didst most prize and accept as the means of our reparation.

Matt. xiii.

This was that pearl and jewel of inestimable

44, 45.

value, which above all the treasures so pro-

fusely offered thee by that rich merchant, pleased thee most and induced thee to give in return what he asked of thee, the pardon of the world. If this jewel be so valuable, it is not meet that she should not share in it, the most perfect of all the perfect, and the most beloved of the children of God.

20.—Moreover, there is nothing better suffices to shew the true value of sufferings endured for the love of God, because

the real proof of love is patient endurance for the sake of the beloved, and no other proof is equal to it. Thus, as God himself never so plainly shewed mankind the greatness of his love, innumerable as his favours were, until he came to suffer for them, so never can man properly shew his love, however great his services to God, until he suffers for his sake. St.

Romans v.

3 & 4.

Paul says, "we glory also in tribulations knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience trial; and trial hope." Therefore should a man suspect every virtue and holiness in himself, until he has been tried by the test of tribulation. Because, according to the

Eccle. xxvii. 6.

wise man: "The furnace trieth the potter's vessels, and the trial of affliction just men."

21.—God amongst all the works of nature created nothing to rest in idleness; much less then does he wish in the matter of grace that his gifts should remain idle. On this account he distributes to each of his elect the burthen he has to bear, according to his strength and the talents of grace he has received. Therefore here we are not to look upon the greatest enjoyment, but rather the greatest tribulation as the greatest favour. As the Psalmist says; "How long wilt thou feed us

Psalm lxxix. 6.

with the bread of tears; and give us for our drink, tears in measure?" and the measure shall be this, that the greatest favourite shall be the most afflicted and subjected to the most tribulations. When Moses made peace between

Exodus xxiv.

God and his people, the Scriptures inform us that he sprinkled the people with blood, and the rest of the blood he poured out upon the altar. Hence all who have resolved to be the friends of God must understand that their friendship must be consecrated in blood, not only in the blood of Christ, but also in their own blood, that is to say, in

Mark xlv.

patience and suffering. He drank first of the chalice at that last supper with his disciples, but after he had drunk he gave of what remained in the cup to those who were invited and told them to share it amongst them, that

each might drink his share ; thus all must partake of this chalice and it is necessary for all as members of Christ to conform with him in suffering. Still is there this distinction amongst men, that it will suffice for the generality and less perfect to be sprinkled with blood ; but those who are more closely united to God and who deserve to be called his altars will not only have to be sprinkled, but to be dyed and bathed in blood. Because, the heat of the battle is for the strong and their reward will be the brightest crown. The two most beloved of the Father in this world were Jesus Christ and his Mother ; and because they excelled all the world in virtue, so did they surpass all the world in their sufferings. The world has not seen two greater than these, nor two more subjected to afflictions.

22.—Be comforted then, Oh ye who suffer tribulations, for the more ye suffer, the more will ye resemble Jesus Christ and his Mother. Be comforted then, all ye who are suffering affliction, because you are not therefore abandoned by God, but rather, if you suffer with patience, are more beloved by him. Again and again be comforted all ye who suffer tribulations, because an afflicted heart is most pleasing to God and there is no surer sign of his friendship than

Psalm l. patience under tribulations. Tribulations disgrace no one, otherwise would Christ himself be disgraced and the Mother of Christ, and God himself because he always sends tribulations to those he loves best.

23.—What is tribulation but the cross ? Would it not then be despising the cross to despise tribulation ? And to shun tribulation would it not be to shun the cross ? If then we honour the cross, that is the figure of the cross which is now dead, why should we shun the living cross, that is to suffer for the sake of the cross ? This is to be like the Jews,

Matt. xxiii. of whom our Saviour said that after persecuting the prophets, they built over them splendid sepulchres, honouring them after their death and persecuting them during

life. Thus do wicked Christians follow their example, by honouring on the one hand, the dead cross, whilst on the other they spit upon and deny the living one, that is suffering for the sake of the cross.

24.—Let no one therefore be cast down saying that he is suffering for his sins, or without having committed sin, because however he may suffer it is at last only bearing his cross. If thou sufferest for thy sins, thou sufferest on the cross of the Good Thief; but if thou sufferest without having sinned and without fault, thou shouldst be all the more comforted, for that is to suffer on the cross of thy Saviour.

25.—At the end of the meditation, return thanks and offer a petition, as mentioned before in the second chapter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MEDITATION ON THE DESCENT OF OUR SAVIOUR INTO LIMBO; ON HIS GLORIOUS RESURRECTION; ON HIS APPEARANCE TO OUR BLESSED LADY TO MARY MAGDALEN AND THE DISCIPLES; FOR SUNDAY MORNING.

Having made the sign of the cross with the preparation mentioned in the second chapter, reflect on the mystery of the Glorious Resurrection under which head four principal points may be considered; that is to say, The descent of our Lord into limbo, his Resurrection, his appearance to our blessed Lady and afterwards to Mary Magdalen and his disciples.

§ 1.—*The text of St. John the Evangelist says:—*

1.—“And on the first day of the week Mary Magdalen cometh early, when it was yet dark unto the sepulchre; and
 John xx. she saw the stone taken away from the-
 Mark xvi. sepulchre, and that the body was not there,
 Luke xxiv. and when she found not the body, she went
 outside of the monument into the garden weeping. And whilst she was yet weeping, she stooped down, and looked into the monument, and saw two angels seated, clothed in white, the one at the head and the other at the foot of the

place where the body of Jesus had been laid. They say to her; 'Woman why weepest thou?' She saith to them, 'because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.' When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing; and she knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith to her, 'Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?' She thinking that it was the gardener, saith to him: 'Sir, if thou hast taken him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him: and I will take him away.' Jesus saith to her: 'Mary.' She turning saith to him: 'Rabboni,' which is to say, Master. Jesus saith to her: 'Do not touch me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God.' Mary Magdalen cometh and telleth the disciples; 'I have seen the Lord, and these things he said to me.'"

2.—"Now when it was late that same day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them: 'Peace be to you.' And when he had said this, he shewed them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord. He said therefore to them again; 'Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you.' When he had said this he breathed on them; and he said to them: 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.'"

3.—"Now Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him: 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them: 'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.' And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst,

and said: 'Peace be to you.' Then he saith to Thomas: 'Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.' Thomas answered, and said to him; 'My Lord and my God.' Jesus saith to him: 'Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed.' Many other signs also did Jesus in the sight of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God: and that believing you may have life in his name."

§ 2.—*Meditation on the above passages.*

4.—"This is the day which the Lord hath made: let us be
Psaln cxvii. 24. glad and rejoice therein." The Lord hath made every day, for he is the maker of time, but this day he is said particularly to have made, because on this day he completed the most excellent of all his works, the work of our redemption. Then as this is called by excellence the work of God, from its superiority over all his works, so is this day
John iv. also called the Lord's Day, because on it he completed the most excellent of all his works.

5.—It is also said that this is the day which the Lord hath made, because all that occurred upon it was the work of his hand alone. With every other festival and mystery celebrated in honour of our Saviour, we find invariably some act of ours connected, because in them we ever find some admixture of sorrow, and sorrow is the child of sin, consequently they are all mingled with something human. But this day is not a day of labour, nor of sorrow, but of freedom from sorrow and abounding in glory, and thus is it purely the day of the Lord. Then on this day who will not rejoice? On this day the Humanity of Christ rejoiced, the Mother of Christ rejoiced, his disciples rejoiced, heaven and earth rejoiced, and joy even penetrated to the regions below. The sun shone brighter on this day to do homage to the Lord with

its light on the day of his joy, as it paid its homage by its
 Matt. xxvii. darkness on the day of his passion. The heavens which shaded themselves at the sight of his sufferings, that they might not see their Creator stript naked, now glisten with unwonted brilliancy at seeing him rise triumphant from the Sepulchre. Thus then were the heavens filled with joy; and thou, earth, take thy share in this joy, for on this day, gleams from the tomb a brighter ray than any sunbeam shed upon the earth. A certain contemplative divine tells us that every Sunday morning when he rose to matins and called to mind the mystery of the day he was so filled with delight that he fancied all creatures in heaven and on earth were at the same hour singing in full choir and crying out with a loud voice. Hallelujah to thy resurrection, Oh Christ; let the heavens and the earth rejoice, Hallelujah.

6.—In order then in some measure to excite thy feelings to a due appreciation of this day's mystery, consider first how our Saviour, having gone through all the stages of his passion, urged by that same charity, which for our sakes ascended the cross, descended into hell to complete the work of our redemption; because having chosen to suffer death to deliver us from death, so would he descend into hell to deliver his own from death's captivity.

7.—Then, into hell this triumphant conqueror descends in his splendour and power, and thus Eusebius Emisenus describes his entry: Oh beautiful stream of light pouring from the lofty vault of the heavens, thou clothest with sudden brilliance those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death! Because at the moment the Redeemer descended into those regions, that eternal night was illuminated, the wailing of those lamentations was stilled, and all the cruel gang of tormentors trembled at his sight. There were the princes of

Exodus xv.

Edom confounded, there the mighty men of Moab trembled, and the dwellers in the land of Canaan were stupified. Then began all those hellish torturers in the midst

of their obscurity and darkness to murmur together: Who is this so terrible, so powerful, and so resplendent! Such a man as this is new to hell, never before has the world sent such a man to our dungeons. He is an avenger, not a debtor; an aggressor, no sinner; he appears a judge, not a criminal; he comes to fight, not to suffer. Where were our guards and watchers when this conqueror burst through our bars and assaulted our gates? Who is he so powerful? were he a culprit, he would have lacked the daring. And were he obscured by sin, his light would not so penetrate our darkness. But if he is God, why comes he to look into hell? If man, whence comes his audacity? If God, what does he in the grave? And if man, how has he managed to cheat our limbo? Oh Cross, thus hast thou baffled our hopes and brought about our destruction! From one tree we gathered all our riches, and now by means of another we lose them.

8.—Such were the murmurs amongst those gangs of evil spirits when this noble conqueror entered in triumph to set at

Gen. iii.

liberty their captives. There were gathered together the souls of all the departed just from the beginning of the world up to that hour. There might be seen one prophet who was sawn in pieces, another that was stoned, another whose neck had been crushed with an iron bar, and others who in divers ways had glorified God in their death. Oh glorious company! Oh noblest treasures of heaven! richest

Gen. ii. & iii.

portion of the triumph of Christ! There were our first parents who peopled the world, as they were the first to sin, so were they the first in faith and hope. There stood that venerable patriarch who by building the ark saved

Gen. viii.

the seed of humanity to re-people the earth

Gen. xvii.

after the waters of the deluge. There was the father of the true believers who was found worthy of receiving first the testament of God, and the sign on the flesh to distinguish his descendants. There was his obedient son Isaac who in carrying on his back the wood on which he

Ibid. xxvii. was to be sacrificed, foreshadowed the sacrifice destined to redeem mankind. There was the holy father of the twelve tribes who gaining by borrowed garments and in another's guise his father's blessing prefigured the mystery of the Humanity and Incarnation of the divine word.

Matt. xiv. There stood also but like a guest and fresh sojourner in that land, the holy Baptist, also that blessed old man who wished not to depart from the world until his eyes had looked upon the Redeemer, till he had held him in his arms and had sung like a swan that sweet song before he died. There too remained in his place the poor man Lazarus

Luke ii. 16. mentioned in the Gospel, whose sores and patience entitled him to be associated with that noble company in all their hopes.

9.—There this choir of holy souls was groaning and sighing for the coming of this day; and in the midst of them, like the leader of the band, that saintly king and prophet repeated without ceasing his lamentation of former days saying: "As

Psaln xli. the hart panteth after the fountains of waters, so my soul panteth after thee, Oh God, my tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: where is thy God?" Holy King if that be the cause of thy lamentation cease that song of woe, for here is thy God, here thy Saviour. Change now thy song, and sing again what long ago in spirit thou didst sing when thou wrotest these words. "Oh Lord thou hast blessed thy earth, and thou hast delivered Jacob out of bondage. Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of thy people and thou hast concealed the multitude of their sins." And thou Holy Jeremiah, who wast stoned for the sake of this thy Lord, close the book of the Lamentations which thou wrotest over the destruction of Jerusalem and over the pollution of the temple of God; for here thou seest a more beautiful temple rebuilt after three days and another more beautiful Jerusalem stretched over the globe.

10.—What tongue can express the feelings of those blessed fathers when they saw their darkness illuminated, their exile at an end, their glory begun? When they found themselves delivered verily from the bondage of Egypt and their enemies drowned in the Red sea, they would sing together and say: 'Let us sing to the Lord because he has gloriously triumphed, and the horse and his rider he has drowned in the sea.' How would he our first parent prostrate before the feet of his Son and Lord, cry out; Now hast thou come beloved and long looked for Lord, to atone for my transgression; thou hast come to fulfil thy promise and thou hast not forgotten those that hoped in thee. Thy boundless compassion has overcome all difficulties and the immensity of thy love has conquered the sufferings and sorrows of the cross.

11.—Words cannot describe the delight of these fathers, yet greater beyond all comparison was that which filled the breast of the Redeemer at the sight of such a multitude of souls redeemed by his blood. Oh Lord, how well were then thy agonies on the cross repaid thee, at the sight of the first fruits of that sacred tree? The Patriarch Joseph in the land of Egypt with two sons born to him, forgot all his past sorrows: and in commemoration of this he gave to his first-born in that land the name of Manasses, saying: 'God hath made me to

Gen. xli.

forget all my labours, and my father's house.'

What then would the Saviour feel seeing himself surrounded by so many children after the martyrdom of the cross was finished? when he saw that precious olive tree covered with such fine and beautiful buds?

§ 3.—*On the resurrection of the body of our Saviour.*

12.—But how comes it, Oh my Saviour, that thou givest no share in thy glory to that most sacred body which lies awaiting thee in the sepulchre? Recollect, the law says; in the division of spoil, an equal share shall go to him who remains in the camp and to him who joins in the battle. Thy

holy body awaits thee in the tomb, and thy most holy soul has gone to do battle against the powers of hell: let thy body share the glory for thou hast gained the victory.

13.—The holy body remained in the sepulchre in that woful state the Lord had left it, stretched on that cold stone, clothed in its shroud, the face bound with a napkin and all its members cut and mangled. The time was after midnight and day had begun to dawn, when the Sun of Justice sought to anticipate the morning light and forestall the coming day. At that same happy hour that glorious soul re-entered its holy body. And how, thinkest thou, was this accomplished? Words cannot describe, but an illustration may explain. Thou mayst at times have noticed a dark cloud hanging over the setting sun; and seen his parting rays suffuse the whole with dazzling tints, till the cloud hung in glorious beauty rivalling the brilliant splendour of the sun. Thus then did that glorious soul after touching and entering that holy body, convert all its darkness into light, all its foulness into beauty, and change it from the most disfigured into the most beautiful of bodies. Thus did our Lord rise from the tomb, perfectly glorious like the first-born of the dead and the harbinger of our resurrection.

This is that holy Patriarch Joseph, now delivered from prison,
Gen. xli. shorn of his hair, but clad in the robes of
Exodus ii. immortality and Lord over the land of Egypt.

This is that Holy Moses snatched from the water and taken out of the basket from amongst the reeds, he who overthrew the power and the chariots of Pharaoh. This is that Holy

Ester vi. 7. Mordecai, stript of his sackcloth and clothed in royal robes, who overpowering his enemy and crucified on his own cross, delivered all his people from death. This is

Dan. xiv. that Holy Daniel come forth from the lion's den scatheless from the fangs of the hungry beasts. This is

Judges xiv. that strong Samson, who surrounded by his enemies and shut up in their city, arose at midnight, shattered their gates and bars, baffling all the plans and designs of his

adversaries. This is that Holy Jonas delivered up to death
Jonas ii. to save his companions, who entering into the belly of the monstrous fish was on the third day thrown up on the banks at Nineveh. Who is this who when in the jaws of the cruel monster could not be devoured by it, and when plunged in the abysses of the ocean still drew the breath of life, and when swallowed in the depths of perdition, death itself did homage to? This is our triumphant Saviour, whom that savage insatiable monster death, attacked: but after it had him within its jaws, recognizing its captive, was afraid to hold him; because though after death the earth swallowed him, finding him free from sin, she could not detain him, because it is not the suffering death that makes man guilty, but the guilt of man was the cause of death.

§ 4.—*On our Lord's manifestation of himself to the Blessed Virgin.*

14.—Oh Lord, thou hast now glorified and filled with delight that holy body which suffered with thee upon the cross. Remember also Oh Lord, that thy flesh is also the flesh of thy Mother, and that she too suffered with thee, when she saw thee suffering upon the cross. As she partook in thy sufferings, it is just that she should partake in thy resuscitation. Thy apostle has declared that thy companions in suffering shall be the companions also of thy glory; and since our blessed Lady was thy faithful companion in suffering from the manger to the cross, it is just that she should also be the companion in thy joys. Clear that clouded sky, unveil that hidden moon, disperse the shadows that darken that sorrowful soul, dry the tears of those virgin eyes, and bid the flowery spring return, since the winter storms are past.

15.—At that same hour the Blessed Virgin would in the retirement of her chamber be longing for the coming dawn.

From the depths of her heart like the moaning lioness, she bewailed her dead offspring on the third day, saying: 'Arise King of Glory; arise with psaltery and lute; return triumphant to the world; good shepherd gather together thy flock; hear, my son, the cries of thy afflicted mother; and since they once sufficed to bring thee from heaven to earth, let them now attract thee here from the regions below.' Amidst those cries and tears, a flood of celestial light suddenly illuminates her lowly dwelling, and behold before the Mother's eyes appears the Son shining in the glory of his resurrection. More beautiful than the morning star, brighter than the mid-day sun, that face beaming with every lovely grace, the spotless mirror of the divine glory, burst upon the Mother's sight. She beholds before her, her Son revived and glorious, vanished every foul trace of brutal violence, those eyes divine again serenely smiling and every former beauty restored with increased intensity. Those gaping wounds, the Mother's sword of grief, now changed to fountains of love. Him, whom she saw crucified between thieves, she now beholds surrounded by saints and angels. Him, who from the cross entrusted her to the protection of the disciple, she beholds with open

John xix.

arms giving her the kiss of peace. Him, whose lifeless body she had clasped in her arms, she now looks on risen from the dead. She holds him and will not loose him; she embraces him and begs him not to depart. On a former occasion mute with grief, her tongue was silenced, now mute with joy, it is unable to speak.

16.—What tongue can tell, what understanding comprehend the excess of this joy? We are unable to understand things beyond our capacity, except by comparison with lesser things within its range, calculating by a scale upwards and conjecturing one thing from our knowledge of another. Imagine then in order to appreciate this joy; the joy of the Patriarch Jacob, when after he had bewailed with floods of tears his well-beloved son Joseph as dead, he was told not only that

he was alive, but was ruler over all the land of Egypt. The Holy Scriptures inform us that when he heard this news, his pleasure and astonishment were so great, that he seemed like one suddenly roused from a deep sleep, unable for some time to recollect himself and give credit to what his children told

Gen. xlv. 28.

him. But when at last he believed what was told him, the Sacred Writings add, his soul seemed filled with a new life and he exclaimed: 'It is enough for me, if Joseph my son be yet living; I will go and see him before I die.' Tell me now; if he who had eleven other sons alive at home, was so filled with joy on learning that only one whom he thought dead, was still alive, what would be Her joy, who had but one, and such an one and one so dear, when after having seen him dead, she saw him now resuscitated and glorious, not the ruler over all the land of Egypt only but over the whole creation? Is any understanding able to comprehend this? Truly such joy would have burst her heart, but for the miraculous interposition of divine assistance. Oh blessed Virgin! this is enough for thee; it is enough that thy Son lives, is present before thee, and that thou seest him before thy death, in order that thou mayst have nothing more to desire. Oh Lord, how well thou knowest how to console those who suffer for thy sake! How her former great sufferings appear nothing in comparison with this present joy. If thus thou comfortest those who suffer for thy sake, blessed and happy are the sufferings of those who are thus rewarded.

17.—Furthermore consider how our Saviour shewed himself to his disciples and particularly to Mary Magdalen, of which we shall say nothing at present lest this meditation be too long.

18.—Having finished the meditation, make an act of thanksgiving and offer a petition, as mentioned before in the second chapter.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A FEW PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE EXERCISE OF
MENTAL PRAYER.

What has been hitherto stated is intended to furnish matter for consideration, which is one of the principal ingredients in mental prayer, because many persons, have not within themselves, sufficient matter for meditation, and thus lose the advantages arising from it. We now propose to speak shortly of the manner and form to be adopted in the exercise itself. And though the Holy Spirit is our head master in this, still daily experience points out, that some instructions are necessary, because the way which leads to God is rugged, and requires a guide without whose help many will squander away their time and wander far out of the path.

FIRST.—It is advisable therefore in the first place, when we intend to meditate on any one of the foregoing subjects, as our special exercise for any particular time, not to confine ourselves so rigidly to it as to scruple at deviating to any other of the subjects, should we find in the other greater devotion, more pleasure and more spiritual profit. Because the object of all being to excite devotion, what most contributes to further that object, should be deemed the best; we should nevertheless not change for trivial causes, but only when some clear advantage may accrue from it.

SECONDLY.—Everyone should endeavour to avoid in this exercise excessive intellectual speculation, and strive rather to engage the affections and sentiments of the will than wander into the speculations of the understanding. Because undoubtedly those do not follow the right course in prayer who meditate on the divine mysteries, as if they were engaged in preaching upon them; this tends rather to disturb than collect the mind, to stray beyond oneself more than to enter into oneself. Therefore to succeed properly in this exercise, we should approach it with the feelings of an unlearned humble person, with the will disposed and ready to feel and love the

things of God, rather than with the understanding sharpened and anxious to scrutinize them; because that is the duty of those who study in order to learn and not of those who pray and meditate upon God in order to excite compunction.

THIRDLY.—As the last rule prescribes how to subject the action of the understanding and intrust all to the will, so this is directed to impose some restraint and bounds on the will itself and to curb its impetuosity. It is therefore to be borne in mind that the devotion we are seeking to obtain, is not a thing to be acquired by physical force, as those seem to imagine, who with too much earnestness of manner and forced sorrow and as if by witchery, extract tears from their eyes and sobs from their breasts, when they meditate on our Saviour's passion. Because this is apt to dry up the heart and render it unsuitable for the visitations of the Lord, as Casianus teaches us. Such practices also are apt to injure the bodily health, and occasionally leave the soul so frightened with the distaste she has there received, that she is afraid to return to the exercise, having found by experience much suffering from it. Therefore let a man be satisfied with performing well his part, that is with feeling himself in the presence of his suffering Lord, looking on him with sincerity and calmness, with a tender and compassionate heart, prepared to cherish any sentiments which God may please to infuse into him, more ready to receive the affections which his mercy may grant, than to express them by external demonstrations. And having done this, let him not feel troubled even when none shall be granted to him.

From the above we may gather the kind of attention necessary in prayer, for it is our principal duty during the time of prayer to keep the heart alive, attentive, and directed to the things above and not depressed and slothful.

FOURTHLY.—But for the same reason that the undivided and concentrated attention of the heart is necessary, it is also necessary that it should be tempered and moderated, that

it may not injure the health nor prejudice devotion; because some weary and fatigue the head with the excessive violence they use to constrain their wandering thoughts, as we have already said, and others to avoid this inconvenience remain slothful and remiss and easily carried away by every idle breath of wind.

To avoid these two extremes take a middle course so as not to harass the brain by too close an attention, nor allow the thoughts to wander indiscriminately through sloth and negligence. For the same reason that we caution a person mounting a skittish horse to hold the reins steadily lest he back or run away, so should we steady and temper our attention, and not urge it too much nor weary it into fretfulness.

More especially is it important to warn people against fatiguing the brain by too close an attention at the beginning of a meditation, because the result usually follows that they lack strength, as they proceed, like travellers who press forward too quick, at the beginning of their journey.

FIFTHLY.—But the most important point is, that those who practice prayer should not be dismayed, nor abandon the holy exercise, if they do not realize the sweetness of devotion which they are seeking for. It is necessary to hope for the coming of the Lord with longanimity and perseverance, because it is due to the glory of his Majesty, to the lowness of our condition and to the importance of the occupation we have in hand, that we should oftentimes stand hoping and watching at the doors of his sacred palace.

Therefore when thou hast waited a short time for the coming of the Lord, and he has visited thee, give him thanks, and if he seems not to visit thee, humble thyself before him, and recollect that thou dost not deserve what is not given to thee, and be content with offering thyself as a sacrifice, with denying thy own will, crucifying thy appetite, striving against the devil and thy own self, and with having at least acted thy part properly.

And if thou hast not adored the Lord with the sensible adoration thou hast wished, it is enough that thou hast offered thy adoration in spirit and in truth, as he himself desires to be adored. And believe me this is the most dangerous pass in this navigation where true devotion is tested, and if thou comest well out of this the rest of thy voyage will be prosperous.

SIXTHLY.—Similar to the last and not less necessary is the following advice to the servant of God, not to rest content with any little relish he may find in prayer, like some do, who after shedding a solitary tear or feeling a slight melting of the heart, immediately think their exercise is finished and perfect: this is not enough for what we aim at here. Because as a slight sprinkling of water is not enough to make the soil bring forth its fruits, but merely lays the dust and moistens the surface, whereas sufficient water is necessary to penetrate deep and thoroughly saturate the land, to make it fructify, so also in this case, a bountiful supply of this dew and heavenly water is necessary to produce the fruit of good works.

For this reason it is specially advisable to spend as long a time as possible in this holy exercise. And one long meditation will be better than two short ones; because if the time is short, it is all spent in curbing the imagination and quieting the heart; and if after both are calmed we immediately rise from the exercise when we ought really to be beginning it, it will not be very profitable. To come more particularly to the length of time we should spend in this exercise, less than an hour and a half or a couple of hours is too short for prayer, because half an hour is frequently spent in tuning the instrument, and so to speak, in stilling the imagination, and the rest is necessary for the enjoyment of the fruit of prayer.

It is true, when this exercise follows immediately upon other holy exercises, the heart is found in a more suitable state for the duty, and like dry wood catches quicker the heavenly fire; also in the morning the time for prayer may be shorter, because that is the time of all others best suited for

this duty. Nevertheless let him who has but little time to spare in consequence of his numerous engagements, not omit to offer his mite with the poor widow in the temple; because if he is not wilfully negligent, he who provides for all his creatures according to their several necessities will also provide for him according to his wants.

SEVENTHLY.—In conformity with the last, we proceed to give another similar piece of advice, which is, that when the soul is visited during the time of prayer, or at any other season with a special visitation of God, the opportunity should not be allowed to slip by, but we should seize it when it is offered, for doubtless a man will sail further in one hour with this wind, than in many days without it. It is said the blessed St. Francis did this, and St. Bonaventure writes of him that he set such especial value on such an occurrence, that if when on a journey he was visited by our Lord with some special visitation, he made his companions go forward and remained stationary until he had ruminated on and digested the precious morsel sent from heaven. Those who omit to do this are usually chastised with this punishment, they cannot find the Lord when they seek him, because when he sought them he found them not.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ON DEVOTION.

1.—The severest infliction to which those who devote themselves to a life of prayer are subject, is the want of devotion which they so often feel; for nothing is sweeter than prayer when it is accompanied by devotion. Therefore as we have already described the matter and substance of prayer, and the method to be followed in conducting it, it now devolves upon us to point out what will aid and what will check devotion, and the ordinary temptations to which the most devout are exposed, also to advise on some of the most necessary points for obtaining it. It will be well then first to

define the meaning of devotion, in order to know for certain the quality of the jewel we are in search of.

2.—St. Thomas calls devotion, a virtue which qualifies a man for every other, and which awakens in him the power, and renders easy to him the duty, of working well. This definition shews clearly the necessity and great utility of this virtue which comprises within itself much more than people usually think.

3.—It must always be borne in mind that man's corrupt nature is the principal obstacle encountering him in his efforts to lead a good life. This corruption was engendered by sin which infused into our nature a strong inclination to evil and a great lethargy and indifference in the pursuit of virtue ; These two causes strew the road to virtue with every sort of impediment, otherwise it is of itself the loveliest most charming and agreeable path to follow.

4.—To overcome these difficulties the Divine Wisdom has provided the powerful aid of devotion as a most efficacious remedy. For as the breeze disperses the clouds and unveils the calm blue sky, so does true devotion sweep away the sorrows and troubles of the soul and qualifies her for every virtue. She is the virtue of all virtues, the special gift of the Holy Ghost, a heavenly dew, an aid and visitation direct from God, obtained by means of prayer. Her function is to wrestle with these difficulties, to expel laziness, promote energy, to enlighten the understanding, strengthen the will, kindle the love of God, quench the flames of concupiscence, excite a loathing for the world and detestation of sin ; also to substitute fresh fervour, an altered spirit, new breath and redoubled strength for working well. Thus as Samson, whilst his hair remained untouched by the scissors, was the strongest man, but when his locks were cut, was reduced to the level of other men, so is the christian soul, whilst endowed with devotion fortified with superhuman strength, but shorn of it, is weak and feeble. We cannot exalt this virtue more than by

saying, that she alone is the stimulant and spur to every other, he therefore who sincerely desires to travel along the road to virtue, should never be without this spur, otherwise he cannot expect to get his vicious beast out of the slough of laziness.

5.—From what we have said it is easy to discern the nature of true devotion, which does not consist in that tender feeling of the heart or internal consolation which is sometimes felt in prayer, but in a readiness and anxiety to work well. Hence it often happens, when our Lord wishes to try his own, that the one is unaccompanied by the other. True it is that this devotion and readiness often merit and obtain this consolation, and on the other hand, this same consolation and spiritual delight increase true devotion. Hence may the servants of God with just reason seek and ask for these joys and consolations, not only on account of the delight derived from them, but because of the increase of devotion which springs from them, qualifying us to work well, according to that of the prophet: "I have followed the ways of thy commandments, Oh Lord, when thou didst expand my heart, that is, with the delight of thy consolation which was the cause of my joy." We will now therefore proceed to treat on the mode of acquiring devotion, and as she is the stimulant of every other virtue, to treat on that, will be to discuss the means of acquiring all virtues.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ON NINE DIFFERENT HELPS TO DEVOTION.

1.—The helps to devotion are many and various, amongst them we may mention in the first place, an earnest and sincere search after it, with a resolute heart determined upon adopting every necessary means to obtain possession of this precious pearl, however difficult or arduous the effort may be: because as no great object can ever be attained without difficulty, so this is no exception to that universal rule, at all events for beginners.

2.—We must protect the heart from vain and idle thoughts, from strange affections and desires, and from all restlessness and the struggles of passion, because all feelings of this sort are a clog upon devotion, and the heart requires to be attuned for prayer, like the lute for music.

3.—A guard must be placed on the senses, especially on the eyes, the ears, and on the tongue, because by the tongue the heart is dissipated, and through the eyes and ears strange things fill the mind, and the calm and peace of the soul are troubled. Therefore is there much good reason in the saying, that a contemplative should be dumb and deaf and blind, because the less he is distracted externally, the more composed will he be internally.

4.—Solitude is also a powerful assistant, because it not only removes the occasions of distraction from the senses and the heart, but invites us to retire within ourselves and commune with God alone, urged thereto by the opportunity of the place, where he alone is admitted.

5.—Another help is derived from reading devout books which supply matter for consideration, collect the heart, awaken devotion, and cause a man to reflect with pleasure on what he has learnt with delight, because memory ever loves to recall the recollection of what the heart delights in.

6.—The habitual consciousness of God's presence and the feeling that we are always walking in his sight, and the frequent use of those short prayers which St. Augustin calls ejaculations are also powerful assistants: because they keep a guard over the heart and foster the warmth of devotion, as we have before explained. Thus will a man at all hours find himself prepared for prayer. This is a most essential point, in a spiritual life, and one of the most powerful resources for such as have neither much time nor opportunity for prayer, and he who is careful on this point will soon derive great advantages from it.

7.—Constant perseverance in good exercises at their regular and ordinary times and places, is of powerful use, especially at morning and night, which, according to the Holy Scriptures, are the most suitable times for prayer.

8.—Hardships, abstinence, a poor diet, a hard bed, the hair cloth, discipline and such like, are also powerful aids : because as all these are originated by feelings of devotion, so do they serve to quicken preserve and increase the root from which they spring, which is devotion.

9.—Works of mercy are also of importance, inasmuch as they inspire us with confidence to present ourselves before God : they unite good deeds with our prayers, so as to make them not barely dry requests, but a claim for our prayers to be mercifully received as proceeding from hearts that have shewn mercy to others.

CHAPTER XXX.

ON NINE THINGS INJURIOUS TO DEVOTION.

1.—As certain things tend to assist devotion, so do others tend to impede it, amongst these the first is sin, not only mortal but also venial sins ; because these although they do not altogether extinguish, nevertheless cool the fervour of charity, which is but another name for devotion ; therefore they should be carefully avoided, if not for the evil which they contain, at all events for the good which they frustrate.

2.—Another impediment is remorse of conscience, which springs from sin, and when carried to excess, leaves the soul restless, shattered, dismayed, and weak in every pious exercise.

3.—Another impediment arises from bitterness or sourness of heart or inordinate grief, because the delicious suavity of a good conscience and of spiritual joy cannot sympathize with them.

4.—Anxious cares and solitudes are hindrances, they are the flies of Egypt which tease the soul and disturb her spiritual repose and slumber, and interrupt and divert her from devout exercises.

5.—Too many occupations are also injurious because they consume time and fill the mind, leaving a man neither leisure nor inclination for the service of God.

6.—Delicacies and sensual comforts are also impediments, inasmuch as they make spiritual exercises distasteful, hence he who surrenders himself to worldly consolations, deserves not, according to St. Bernard, the consolations of the Holy Ghost.

7.—Too much indulgence in eating and drinking, especially in late suppers, is to be avoided, for heavy suppers make a bad bed for spiritual exercise and holy vigils, as a full belly is not well suited for a flight towards heaven.

8.—Another impediment arises from the vice of curiosity, or an anxiety to hear, see, and learn the news of the day ; because time is thereby wasted, the soul is made restless, the thoughts are scattered, and so devotion is checked.

9.—Finally an interruption of all these holy exercises is another impediment, and should not be permitted except for some pious or important duty ; because the spirit of devotion being sensitive, when it once flies away, is not easily recalled.

10.—Thus as flowers unless regularly watered, droop and wither, so does devotion unless refreshed by the dew of devout meditation.

11.—We have condensed these instructions in few words that they may be easily retained in the memory ; practice and long experience will prove their value to those who seek to test it.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ON THE ORDINARY TEMPTATIONS TO WHICH THOSE ARE
SUBJECT WHO DEVOTE THEMSELVES TO A LIFE OF PRAYER,
AND ON THE MANNER OF RESISTING THEM.

1.—It will be well now to treat of the ordinary temptations which assail those who dedicate themselves to prayer, also the remedies against them. The following are the principal

ones:—The want of spiritual consolations, the war of idle thoughts, thoughts of a blasphemous or infidel tendency, a want of confidence or distrust in our progress, and presumption that we are more advanced than we really are. These are the most ordinary temptations, and the following are the remedies.

2.—In the first place for such as lack spiritual consolations, the prescription is, on no account to omit the accustomed exercise of prayer however distasteful or fruitless it may seem, but to place yourself in the presence of God like a guilty culprit and examine your conscience; examine whether you may not have forfeited his grace by sin, beg his forgiveness with entire confidence, proclaim the boundless extent of his patience and mercy in bearing so long with you and pardoning one, who has known nothing except to offend him.

3.—Thus by seizing the opportunity of exercising humility, and looking at the greatness of your sins as a stimulant to increase your love for God for having forgiven you so much, will you reap a harvest from a barren soil. And should you find no pleasure in these exercises, do not abandon them, because it is not always necessary that what is for our good should also be agreeable. At all events it is found by experience that they who persevere steadily and sedulously in prayer, doing the little they are able in the best manner they can, finish with finding themselves consoled and satisfied with having performed their part as far as in them lay. It is not much to persevere in prayer whilst it is accompanied by many consolations, but it is a great point when devotion is cold to find prayer plentiful, with more humility and patience and perseverance in working well.

4.—It is also more necessary on these, than on other occasions, to act with caution and circumspection, setting a watch over ourselves and carefully scrutinizing our thoughts words and actions; because when spiritual joy, which is the stroke-oar of our boat, is wanting, it is necessary to supply

her place with extra care and diligence. When thou findest thyself in this strait, thou hast to reckon, as St. Bernard says, That the sails which guided thy vessel have forgot to fill, and the walls of thy fortress have fallen to decay. Thy hope of safety is in thy own arm, thy walls of defence have disappeared, on thy sword and skill depends the battle. Oh how great is the glory of a soul thus struggling and defending herself! she fights without arms and her strength does not depend upon outer bulwarks, but finding herself in the thick of the battle she depends on her own prowess and courage alone.

5.—This is the true test by which to gauge the worth of friends and prove whether they are true or false.

6.—Against the temptations of distracting thoughts which so frequently interfere with us during the time of prayer, the remedy is a brave and constant struggle against them. This however should not be carried on with too much anxiety and solicitude, because this is a matter rather for grace and humility than violence. Therefore when we find ourselves tempted in this way, we should turn our hearts meekly towards God, since this state is not sinful or at most but venially so, and pray to him with devout humility, saying, Oh Lord, thou seest me and what sort of a creature I am; canst thou expect aught but foul exhalations from such a dunghill? Canst thou expect from this soil accursed by thee aught but thorns and briars? Behold, Oh Lord, this is the only fruit it can yield unless it be cleaned by thee. And having prayed thus, resume thy business and patiently expect the visitation of the Lord which never fails the humble. Nevertheless, should the distractions still continue, and thou shouldst persevere in resisting them to thy utmost, thou mayst rest assured that thou art gaining really more by this resistance than thou wouldst be by enjoying God, in all the savour of his sweetness.

7.—With regard to the temptation of blasphemy we may remark that though no sort of temptation is more painful yet there is none less dangerous ; we should therefore as a remedy take no note of it, because there is no sin in the thoughts, but only in entertaining them with pleasure, and as we not only do not consent but quite the reverse, therefore it may be called rather a painful feeling than a fault, because the more a man shuns taking delight in these temptations, the less chance is there of him falling into sin. Therefore the best remedy, as I have stated, is to despise and not to fear them, because when too much feared the fear itself tends to awaken and arouse them.

8.—The remedy against the temptations to infidelity is to consider on the one hand human littleness and on the other God's infinite greatness, to reflect that it is our duty to obey the commandments of the Almighty, not to scrutinize his works, because we see many of them far surpass the limits of human understanding. Therefore he who would enter into the sanctuary of divine things, should enter with much humility and profound respect, should have the simplicity of the dove, not the malicious glance of the serpent, the submissive heart of a disciple not the daring scrutiny of a master. Let him comport himself as a little child, for to such does God reveal his secrets. Let him not care to know the why or the wherefore of God's works ; but rather let him close the eye of reason and open only the eye of faith, because by them we ought to estimate the works of the Almighty. We ought to examine the works of man with the eye of reason, but it is not equal to the investigation of things divine. But inasmuch as this temptation is generally most painful, it requires the same mode of treatment as the last, not to take much notice of it because it is rather a painful feeling than a fault ; and there is no fault without consent of the will as we before explained.

9.—Against want of confidence in God and presumption upon his mercy which are two opposite vices, quite opposite treatments are to be adopted. To relieve the former we must reflect that confidence in God is not to be obtained by our own strength alone, but through divine grace, which is the sooner attained the sooner we distrust our own powers, and place all our confidence in the goodness of God, to whom all things are possible.

10.—To cure presumption we should reflect that there is no surer sign that we are still far from God than the belief that we are close to him. Look at thyself, as if thou wert looking in a mirror, in the lives of the saints and other distinguished individuals still in the flesh, and thou wilt see that before them thou art like a dwarf before a giant, and thus wilt thou cease to be presumptuous.

11.—Another temptation is an inordinate desire for spiritual sweetnesses and consolations, accompanied by disparagement of those who are not favoured with them. As a remedy for this temptation, I will explain what should be our ultimate aim in these spiritual exercises. We must therefore always bear in mind that inasmuch as this communion with God is so sweet and delicious, as the wise man says, it often happens that many attracted by this marvellous sweetness, the pleasure of which is indescribable, seek after God and devote themselves to every spiritual exercise, both in reading, in prayer, and in frequenting the sacraments, solely on account of the intense pleasure they find there, hence their main object is the desire for this admirable sweetness. This is a great and common mistake into which many fall. Because as the principal end of all our actions is to love God and seek after God, such love themselves and seek after themselves, that is to say, after their own proper pleasure and contentment, rather than after God.

12.—And what is worse, another mistake quite as great follows upon it, namely, the disposition to judge one's-self and

others by these delights and feelings, and the belief that every one is more or less perfect, according to the measure with which he participates in the sweetnesses of God. This is a very serious mistake.

13.—As a general rule for the correction of such deceits, let each one bear in mind that the object of all these exercises and of a spiritual life is, obedience to the commandments of God and the fulfilling his will. Therefore it is necessary that our own will should die, in order that the will of God may live and reign, because the one is directly opposed to the other. And inasmuch as so great a victory cannot be achieved without the divine favour and assistance we ought on that account principally to practice prayer, that through it we may obtain this favour and feel these delights to enable us to carry on the struggle with success to its close. For this object and to this end we may ask for and obtain the delights of prayer, as we have already stated, and like David asked for, when he said, "Restore unto me, Oh Lord, the joy of thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit."

14.—Then in conformity with this, every one will comprehend what should be his aim in performing these exercises; and so understand from what point to estimate and measure his own advancement and that of others; not by the delicious favours he may receive from God, but by what he has himself suffered for the sake of God, both by doing the divine will and by denying himself. Hence have the saints truly said, that the real test of a spiritual man is not the delight felt in prayer, but patience in tribulations, self-denial, and obedience to the will of God; yet for all these prayer is most advantageous and the delights and consolations which accompany it most profitable.

15.—Therefore he who wishes to see the progress he has made on the way to God, should look at his daily advancement in internal and external humility, should observe how he bears injuries from the hands of others, how he has learnt to

disregard outward follies, how he has hastened to succour his neighbour in his necessities, how he has shewn compassion and not contempt for the failings of others, how he has learnt to put his trust in God under tribulations, how he governs his tongue and watches over his heart. He should examine whether he has subdued his flesh with all its appetites and desires, how he demeans himself in prosperity and adversity, how he is able to foresee and provide against contingencies. He should also examine whether he is proof against the love of honour of pleasure and of the world, and according to his advancement or falling off in all these things he should judge himself, and not according to. how he has felt or not felt the immediate presence of God. Therefore let him always keep one eye fixed on mortification and the other on prayer, for mortification itself cannot be obtained in perfection without the assistance of prayer.

THE END.



CHESTER:
GRIFFITH, PRINTER, GROSVENOR-STREET.





